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[The Yellow Book]

Mobilization: a word that causes millions to tremble, alters the course of one's life and forces everything out of its normal groove. The sky seems no longer blue. Once again it is war.

A subdued mobilization: the call-up notices were delivered by officials of the district recruiting board. On August 24, 1939, at eleven in the morning, Julian Traube, aged thirty, received orders to report to the 57th Infantry Regiment at 1 PM. There was a stir, a commotion in the streets; the rumors had spread with lightning speed. The city was electrified by the news, which had yet to be fully absorbed by thousands of minds. The mood was, if anything, festive. At midday men in brand-new uniforms but still without weapons were out and about; for now they carried gas-masks slung over their shoulders.

Julian was a young and handsome man with brown hair, an oval face, and an olive complexion. His lips were full and sensual, yet energetic-looking; his beautiful eyes were variously smiling, downcast, or mocking. They expressed what his face contrived to hide. Julian was the son of well-to-do parents. Financially independent, quite talented as an architect, he was only occasionally obliged to turn to his papa for money. Traube had insufficient funds to cover the debts he was continually running up, debts that always exceeded his considerable income. Julian loved the world,

people, his profession, women and cards. That morning the life he had been leading up to now was blown apart by a typhoon in the form of an innocent-looking piece of oblong, yellow paper. His heart contracted and stood still for a moment, then began to pound wildly. His whole being protested, crying out silently and helplessly. He didn't want the war, he didn't want to kill, to fight, to murder or be murdered. And for what? -- Nothing!

Oddly enough, Julian could recall the taste of the last war with every fiber of his being. He remembered himself as a small boy, living in a two-room apartment on Chłodna Street. Julian's parents were young, and he had two little sisters. In one room there was an alcohol still that his father tended day and night. His father was about thirty-five years old and already turning gray. Dozens of people passed through their tiny apartment each day. Things were rough when the authorities showed up; it was necessary to bribe them and hurriedly dismantle the still for a couple of days. /2/ It was even worse when his father was taken down to the police-station: then a larger bribe was exacted. They would sell their pillows, a wardrobe, the sewing-machine. The longer the war went on, the more his parents sighed and the fewer things there were in the apartment. Then his father switched to smuggling. He had a pair of double-layered underwear in which he would conceal flour and candy. When, as often happened, everything would be confiscated, they would have to sell something in order to

buy new merchandise. Mother cried so much that little Adela no longer got upset, nor did Sabinka, the little golden-haired angel with her tiny crooked legs.

Sabinka suffered from rickets due to malnutrition. Papa Traube kept changing jobs. He was hard-working and he adored his wife and children, but was down on his luck. While others enriched themselves during the war, he lost everything he had. Now he was quite indigent and in no position to be choosy about his line of work. He sold candy and worked as a bill-collector for a baker, but it wasn't enough to feed five people. In the fourth year of the war, fortune smiled on Traube. He teamed up with a friend to begin producing ersatz tea. Henceforward, the father's cheeks were rosy and, for the first time, the children could eat as much as they wanted. That was the last they saw of saccharine, which tasted sweet at first but had a lingering bitter aftertaste. They no longer had to eat bread made of sawdust and chestnuts. Julian now had a private tutor, and his father was proud of him.

And then came that morning in 1918, when they disarmed the Germans in the streets of Warsaw. There were twenty years of peace, and now it was to be war again. A yellow, oblong slip of paper. "Julian Traube! Poland summons you to the defense of her frontiers." It makes no difference that you love people, the world, colors and everything that is beautiful. It's no use hating uniforms and those that wear

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them: your pacifism will be no protection from cruelty and sordidness. You have one hour.

Julian had to get a grip on himself. He managed to regain his composure by the time he crossed the threshold of his father's office located behind the enormous warehouse of Jakub Traube & Co. From behind the desk a short but well-proportioned figure rose to greet Julian -- his father, the corners of whose mouth twitched nervously. He had known for a week and had been dreading this moment.

<ILLEGIBLE LINE>

/3/ Pain and fright peered from that beautiful face. Jakub Traube choked up, unable to speak. The two of them, father and son, said not a word. The air hung heavy in the room. Julian mechanically tossed his induction papers onto the desk.

"Sit down, old man, let's have a chat. Your optimism turned out to be groundless, didn't it? War is going to break out any moment now. Go and see Karol, tell him to send Adela to Warsaw. That will very likely be the farthest place from the front. There's no way she can stay, eight months' pregnant, so close to the frontier."

Julian stared at his father's stony face. The latter only nodded rhythmically. As usual, Julian experienced aesthetic pleasure as he looked at this head, this fresh complexion, the flawless line of the nose, the lustrously beautiful white mane. The two men stood up simultaneously. They kept their farewells brief, as time was running short.

"Have you been to see mother? Wait, I'll give you some money." He fumbled nervously in his pockets, which were all full of banknotes, and began stuffing them into Julian's pockets.

"What are you doing? What do I need so much money for? It's not as though there are any poker games at the front."

The older man clutched his son's arms.

"You come back to us. Minus an arm, minus a leg -- just come back."

Julian ran out without saying a word. He still had to drop in and see his mother, who kept an eye on the branch office. She was waiting for him at the door. Her face, which showed traces of its former beauty, was bathed in tears.

"My son, my son," she said tearfully.

"Say good-bye to Sabinka, Adela and Karol for me." Karol had married Adela two years earlier; they were happy together. Karol was a construction engineer.

In the streetcar Julian grew listless from the crowding, the loud talk and the commotion... The streetcar stop: the barracks: that confusion that civilians characteristically produce before they change out of their suits and ties.

For a couple of days Julian stayed with his regiment in Poznań. During this time he went home more than once. On each occasion he said good-bye for [what he thought was] the last time. Not far from the barracks there was a cafe. A large place, half-empty until only recently, it was [now]

filled with soldiers and civilians, cloth-covered tables, the hubbub of conversation and final farewells.

Julian would sit for hours at a table where his friends would drop by to see him. He had his regular spot next to where a cadet sat from morning until late at night with his fiancée. /4/ They were both sweet and both had blue eyes. It was obvious that they loved each other dearly, and that the presence of others inhibited them less and less as time went on.

One day Julian did not make it home. Companies were being mustered and rosters drawn up; he barely had time to pop into the cafe for a moment. At one in the morning came the order to head out. One hundred and twenty rounds of ammunition, four grenades, a carbine and the rest of his gear made for an intolerable load. Julian recalled how during basic training he always had the same impression that he had now: that he wouldn't get five kilometers with this load.

It was a still summer night. They marched down eerily deserted streets illuminated by the barely visible pale blue dots of the streetlamps. The force was accompanied on its march by friends and relatives of the troops. They marched along, never flagging, until they were well out of town.

Aniela Traube could hear the noise of tramping soldiers from the window of her apartment. In a flash she jumped out of bed, threw on a coat, and ran out, unnoticed by anyone, into the street in her slippers.

"What regiment is that marching by?"

"The 57th," came the reply from several directions. Her son's regiment!

"Pardon me, sir," she said, accosting a gentleman as he marched along should to shoulder with his son. "Could you inquire as to the whereabouts of my son, Cadet Traube?"

"Excuse me, ma'am, but it's no use. We still don't know each other's names yet. You might try calling out his name," suggested a soldier politely, his helmet cocked at a rakish angle.

Aniela, whose husband was always complaining that she walked too slowly, fairly flew on this occasion. Every moment a shout burst from her lips: "Cadet Traube! Julian! Julek!" She ran like this for a good hour. She would stumble and fall down, pick herself up and start running and shouting all over again. The din was too great though. Already, the lights of the city were disappearing from view, yet she kept it up, running and calling out without pause, but in vain.

Julian felt rotten. He was seething with resentment towards everyone for abandoning him like this. It seemed as though all the others were being seen off, all the way out of town -- all but him, who was alone. He had no way of knowing that just a few minutes earlier his mother had taken a fall, tried to get up, and fallen back down helplessly. Her hair and face covered with a mixture of tears and dust, she sat in the ditch oblivious to her sprained legs and her fatigue. At dawn a considerate motorist gave her a ride back into town.

Meanwhile Julian was on the march and, as usual during a march, he was bored to death. Fatigue was beginning to tell on all of them. /5/ Morning found them still marching, en route to East Prussia. The officers of the company informed them that war had commenced between Germany and Poland on September 1st. The mood was elevated and warlike. After fifteen hours on the march, they got a break that gave rise to hopes of an extended stop for rest. And so it was; the 57th bivouacked in a tiny, abandoned village whose name nobody could find out. The exhausted men slept like the dead for more than ten hours. A sleepy disheveled cadet clambered out of a pigsty near the haystack where Julian had bedded down. He was in command of a machine-gun unit. They greeted each other like old friends.

Karol Tomaszewski was a twenty-five-year-old law student. At present he had a duty to perform and a fiancée whom he loved deeply.

"So how'd it go for you?" he asked, offering Julian a crumpled cigarette.

"It was terrible. I've got blisters all over my feet."

"Same here. No surprise: new boots, feet not used to it. Also, keep in mind that we marched fifteen hours straight, with only ten minutes off for breaks. Everyone's still sound asleep right out in the open."

"So how does it look to you, when are we going to get to the front?"

"Who knows? From the looks of things, we're already there. Why do you suppose they didn't send us by train? I have to confess -- I didn't like this march one bit. How can they let people go to waste like this on the first day?"

"You've got a point there."

"You're a Jew, aren't you?" The question sounded halfway like a statement.

"Yes. Why do you ask?"

"Please don't get me wrong. I'm no anti-Semite. I just wanted to see how good I was at reading faces. I meant no offense."

"No need to apologize. I'm not ashamed of my origins." There was a note of irritation in Julian's voice.

"Your friend is very pretty -- the one who came to see you in the cafe. She looks familiar," said Karol abruptly, after a pause.

"Well, your fiancée's not so bad-looking herself. She's fairly young, isn't she."

"Nineteen. We were supposed to get married in three months' time, at the end of <?>. /6/ Her father's name is Kibora. He has his own law practice. Perhaps you've heard of him?"

"No. I don't know Poznań. I just got back from Paris. I got my degree in architecture there and had a very good job. I came back to Poland just for a couple of months. I did my stint with the reserves in July. I just get out of

uniform, and a week later here I am back in the army. I guess I'll be here for <?>.

"You're not too fond of the army, I see."

I can't stand being ordered around. Servitude of any kind grates on me."

"You're right, but there's nothing we can do about it. I'm hoping that with the present state of technology this war won't last very long."

"Are you kidding? This war will engulf the whole world. It could go on for years, just like the last one. Technology? You're forgetting that there are gas-masks to take care of the gas, and bullet-proof armor to deal with armor-piercing shells. It reminds me of a story. There was this inventor who offered a shell he had designed to a powerful state. It was capable of penetrating any material known at the time, even the toughest armor-plate. The state purchased the invention for a colossal sum of money. The next day the very same inventor was back with armor-plating that no shell in existence could pierce, not even the one he had sold them the day before."

"Well, we'll see who's right, Julian. May I call you Julian?"

"Sure, why not. I think we should be on a first-name basis. That's the army way of doing things."

"Okay," said Karol, shaking Julian's hand. His blue eyes were smiling like those of a child. "What do you say we stick together? I'm in charge of a machine-gun unit, and

you, if I'm not mistaken, are second-in-command of the last platoon. We can practically march together."

"Speaking of marching -- it looks as though we'll be on the move soon. The captain is on his way back from a staff briefing somewhere. He's a great guy, that Koński. You may have noticed, he didn't get on a horse once during the whole march."

"I know him well from maneuvers last year," replied Karol, stretching.

A few minutes later the regiment was ready to set out. This time they didn't march for long. The force took up a position in a woods a few kilometers away. The company commanders went around collecting the enormous quantities of letters that the troops were writing... They were forbidden to give the local address, but nobody /7/ knew what it was anyway. Right after this the officers and non-coms met for a briefing. They were instructed to inform the troops that according to a radio dispatch, our planes had attacked Berlin, and some of our regiments had already crossed the German frontier. No one was to leave the <perimeter?> of the woods. The briefing was interrupted by the drone of an airplane and the sound of a powerful explosion. The battalion commanders and a couple of officers went out to investigate. An enemy plane had dropped a bomb on the rail line just on the edge on the woods. The regimental commander held a brief council, at which it was decided to keep the men on alert.

A military transport had been destroyed, and the line was torn up for several hundred meters. The infantrymen, who still hadn't <?> the last one, were faced with another long march. Julian's feet were bleeding. Every step he took was so painful that he wanted to scream. Only <?> the farm-boys still had feet in good shape.

They marched all night right until dawn. The rising sun illuminated a farmstead that was the objective of Julian's battalion. The other units stayed back in the woods.

Suddenly there was a raid by several planes. The roaring noise, the gun-fire, the explosions coming one right after the other, the shrieks of the wounded, the billows of smoke -- for a few minutes everything was incredible chaos. From all sides came the sound of engines and machine-gun fire.

Julian lay on the ground. Some kind of insect was crawling on his neck. He kept brushing it away with exasperation, only to have the pest reappear a moment later. This was the only impression he retained from the air-raid. After circling for half an hour, the planes flew off. Everything was still. The dozens of bodies lying strewn about, the moans of the wounded and the burning woods where several battalions had been stationed were all the evidence there was of the casualties that had been inflicted. All hope of getting any rest was now gone. The companies fell in hastily and marched off to some unknown destination. The soldiers looked ashen and dirty. Marching four abreast, they

were barely able to stay in formation. Their cadence was uneven and jerky.

"Well, sir, how do you like the war?" Traube was asked by Andrzej Suwala, a giant fellow from Silesia who was marching alongside Julian.

"And how do you like it?" said Julian, unsure how to respond.

"I'll tell you how I like it. They can take this war and stick it as far as I'm concerned. Where are our fighter-planes? What's happened to our anti-aircraft guns? Am I expected to shoot at planes with a rifle? Pardon my French, but to hell with this job!"

"Hey, calm down," replied Julian. "It was just an accident that they spotted us."

"An accident, sure. And the fact that we haven't eaten for two days is an accident, too, I suppose. Hold on a second, I'll just go and grab a little something."

Julian had noticed a while back that soldiers were running over to a field one by one to gather rutabagas and carrots. Moments later Suwala <came back and presented> Julian with a magnificent <bunch> of rutabagas.

"What do you think -- how much longer can we go on marching?" asked Suwala, picking up where he had left off. "I'm a healthy farm boy, right? Well, my feet are covered with blisters. Another thing, I've got lupus, so as I can't even feel my own ass. Where does that leave a city-slicker like you? You look like you're about to drop. Even the

officers are dragging, and they don't even carry packs. The captain said that England has declared war on Germany, too, so why don't they hurry up and get over here to help us out?" The Silesian was getting more and more worked up thinking about the raid a little while ago.

"Don't get yourself all upset," said Julian, trying to calm him down. "Things are just starting. In a few hours I'm sure everything will be straightened out. We'll get some rest and then it won't be so bad."

The sweltering day was beginning to get to everyone. They were so beat that shouts of "Break! Break!" came from <?> ranks. The shouts became more and more frequent. Nearly the entire company was yelling "Break!" This was the first time in his military career that Capt. Koński, the company commander, had ever heard murmuring in the ranks. His tall figure grew stiff and erect; only the glowering look in his eyes and his clenched jaws betrayed any indication of the fury seething within him. He glanced at his watch and held off ordering the usual ten-minute halt. The unit was taken aback, and the shouts of "Break!" instead of growing louder ceased for a few minutes. Their fatigue and desperation were such, however, that the whole company except for the senior officers and non-coms was soon clamoring. At the end of three hours Koński brought the company to a halt. "On the command: halt!" The men lay on the ground where they fell.

"Atten-hut!" They were all flabbergasted. Only the officers and non-coms responded to the command. Koński's

imposing figure and the subdued hush slowly registered on the weary foot-soldiers and they stood up one by one, sluggishly, reeling like drunks.

/9/ "At ease! Attention! At ease! Shoulder arms! Form up in fours! Attention! Form two ranks! Left front! At ease!" The crisp commands crackled like whiplash. The whole unit had already snapped out of its daze. They executed the commands with exemplary precision. Koński stood before his company, his legs spread far apart. After pausing to look at the faces of the men under his command, he commenced speaking in a sonorous voice:

"You act like a bunch of cattle. I'm ashamed to have such a company. I know you're tired, I know you didn't get any dinner today or yesterday either. Our field-kitchens have been destroyed. New ones will be set up in a few hours. I know you're not used to long marches without a break like this, but you're soldiers at the front. Since there's no way to change this, that's how it has to be. I'm just as tired as the rest of you, and I've walked just as many kilometers as you have. I haven't made any use of my mount, either, even though I have a perfect right to do so, and I'm fifteen years older than all of you. Nothing happens without orders here, and since my orders are to march, I am marching and showing you the way. It's up to me when we stop. There will be no halt at this time. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir!" was the reply shouted in unison. The men were impressed with Capt. Koński.

The going was harder now because they had to march in close order, with skirmishers flung out in advance and on their flanks. Julian was ordered to take two squads to secure the company's left flank. They were to fan out, but maintain communications with the company, and look sharp. Julian clenched his jaws to keep from howling out loud from the pain he felt with every step he took. Managing finally to pull himself together more or less, he got the men to form up. Suwala was in the first group of four. He poked fun at Julian a little, but he was very impressed with the "city-slicker's" bearing. He had become rather fond of the cadet because of his sense of tact and camaraderie.

"Listen up, Suwala," Julian said to him. "Keep your eyes peeled. The Germans could be nearby. I'm designating you as my aide, because those corporals of mine are lucky if they know which end is up." Indeed, Corp. Misiak and Corp. Tarnowski had a hangdog look about them.

They marched for about an hour keeping the company on their right. There were brief intervals when it disappeared from view behind some buildings. At a signal from someone in the company, Julian pulled back with his men to rejoin the main force. A few minutes later the company reached a small rise /10/ covered with trenches, where two battalions had already dug in. It was in these deep trenches that the company finally got to take the long-overdue break. They lay, sat or stood expecting the enemy to come. Their spirits revived when they were issued cigarettes and the field-

kitchen came around with regular meals. Boredom set in. Two days went by uneventfully. During the night they were ordered on the march again. Every conceivable precaution was observed during the march; even smoking was forbidden. The highway along which the 57th Infantry marched was jammed with troops. At daybreak they took up positions in a large forest and on an adjacent farm. No sooner had they managed to shuck their gear than they heard the ominous drone of engines wheeling over the army's emplacements. Bombs were falling and machine-gun fire could be heard. The enemy was making low-altitude bombing runs. In the space of half an hour the entire artillery position in the woods was devastated. Horses ran madly about among the trees dragging their harness behind them.

Julian sat with Karol Tomaszewski against the wall of a small cottage. They watched the raid as though they were at a movie. Suwala was backing his way out of a hollow nearby; his broad rump rose up like a high dome, followed by his ruddy disheveled angular face. Catching sight of Julian his face broke out in a grin revealing his large white teeth.

"Well, thank God, we're still in one piece, sir. Damn it, they've been pounding us like nobody's business. I'll make you a bet that we're gonna move out before we get a chance to rest."

"Quite a fellow," whispered Karol, who was watching Suwala closely. "From your outfit?"

"Yes. He's a swell guy."

"Not that I'm saying anything, sir, but if it keeps on like this, I'm going to go AWOL. I never in all my born days saw infantry fighting with planes. Why the hell did they keep me in the army for a year and a half teaching me to salute and lunge with fixed bayonets?"

Julian and Karol roared with laughter at the giant man's growing agitation.

"They should have showed me how to leap up in the air to where the planes are." He was in the middle of winding up with some curse, but broke off when Corporal Misiak came running up.

"Sirs, do you know what's happened?" he asked in a confidential whisper as he took a seat beside Julian.

"The kid has sh-- his pants..." muttered Suwala quietly, scowling at Misiak.

"They've caught two spies in the village. They had a radio-transmitter."

"I was expecting something like this," replied Karol, as if he were glad to hear it. "It's incomprehensible how they could have spotted us from the air. /11/ We took every precaution during the march. Even the horses had their hooves wrapped. And we didn't encounter anyone along the way."

The same thing kept happening over and over again. Our forces would make a grueling march through woods and roadless tracts, and then make a halt someplace to try to get a little rest. Suddenly there would be a raid, at the end of which

all the attacking planes would escape without so much as a scratch. After carefully searching the buildings in the area they would turn up a clandestine radio-transmitter, or some other method being employed by saboteurs to get word to the enemy's planes. The army was fed up with the incessant marching, the lack of sleep and hot food; the men looked dead on their feet. The officers tried to raise their spirits with dazzling news bulletins from the radio, but hardly anyone believed them anymore. They wanted to fight like soldiers, and march within the limits of the endurance of healthy young men. Instead, they had feet so blistered that they bled and were covered with running sores.

At noon, Julian's battalion was dug in in reserve and awaiting orders to move up to the front line. Julian lay in the trench, his thoughts far away from his immediate surroundings. Suwala was lolling in the sun as usual not far away. In the distance artillery fire and the heavy rattle of machine-guns could be heard. In the trenches the mood was like that on the day before some regimental holiday. Nobody had to tell them: they themselves knew that their baptism of fire was at hand. They would not let down those who were counting on them. They looked at one another in silence; they checked their weapons, as excited as children. At the command, "Forward by ones!" they quickly and easily leapt out of the trenches and stealthily advanced, falling to the ground and crawling along it. The firing became more and more intense. Bullets whizzed by and bored through many of

the men. Julian ran forward keeping Suwala on his right and Misiak on his left with two squads. His heart was pounding furiously as bullets whistled past his ear. The air was filled with the last cries of those who had been mortally wounded. The screams of the wounded plunged Julian's mind into a turbulent chaos. He saw everything; his eyes, straining from their sockets, were like [the lens] of a film-camera cranking at an frenzied rate but still unable to record everything at the same time. Suddenly the hail of bullets became so thick that it was impossible to advance any farther. An extended line of German tanks appeared, bearing straight down on the soldiers.

/12/ Julian lay flat on the bare ground for a few moments, with shells flying overhead and landing behind him spattering lumps of earth. Their position was untenable. Twelve tanks crept forward, each mounting two machine-guns capable of spitting out two thousand rounds per minute apiece. Julian lay on the ground breathing heavily. His head seemed to be on fire underneath his green helmet. Suddenly shouts of "Forward!" and "Charge!" came from all sides, sweeping everyone onto their feet. With bayonets lowered, they gave a wild "Hurrah!" and ran to meet the tanks.

As if amazed by the courage, or the insanity, of the soldiers, the huge steel monsters stopped dead in their tracks. For a single instant the behemoths even ceased their belching fire, only to resume it, redoubled, a moment later.

The enormous mass of soldiers, spread across a wide front, raised a swelling cry of "Hurrah!" and ran unswervingly towards the tanks. <For many of them> this sprint lasting a few seconds was their last act on earth; they fell never to rise again. A few of the lucky ones died, so to speak, on the run. The hoarse screams of the wounded rivaled the collective volume of the rally-cries. Then, wonder of wonders, the tanks -- seeing the infantry coming on in undiminished strength -- turned around. Only two of them, for some inexplicable reason, stayed behind falling to the mercy of the infantrymen. They dragged the crew out half-dead with fear. The forward line had been cleared and the engagement was over. The remnants of the company hastily assembled. The casualties numbered about five hundred men; two tanks had been captured together with their crews. A contingent of fresh troops came marching up. Out of the entire third company commanded by Capt. Koński, Julian recognized only Suwala and Corporal Misiak, and Koński of course. Julian was now in command of a platoon. There was a short march, and then once again they were fighting with God knows whom -- the enemy was nowhere to be seen. Once again lying flat on virtually bare ground, they managed to dig only the most rudimentary of trenches. Overhead whistled the hail of bullets.

It was a dark but starry night. Julian breathed in the smell of the earth. He hunched his head down into his shoulders. He had no desire to die -- not now, not on such a

perfumed night. "All you have to do," Julian thought to himself, "is stick your head up a little and you wind up as carrion for stray dogs." Julian thought about his father and mother. Where were they now? /13/ What were they doing? No doubt he never left their thoughts or their lips. How he envied his brother-in-law Karol just now. He pictured him sitting next to a radio, clean, well-fed, fat and contented with his life. Karol had not served in the army; he had some physical impairment. Julian recalled how the two of them were always ribbing each other, ever since Karol had married into his family. The more money Karol had, the more he loved it. For Julian money was [just] a means to satisfy the desire for life's various pleasures. Karol hoarded it. This was what prompted their needling each other back and forth. Those were the days. Living abroad, working at a great job with one of the biggest construction firms around: interior design was Julian's ruling passion. He worked over the plans for each interior, fussed over them, as if he were designing it for himself. He became so attached to his creations that he had a hard time turning them over to his customers.

And now he had to lie there like a hare waiting for the hunter's bullet. The Germans were firing mixed rounds; every twentieth round was a tracer-bullet. The fire was so intense that the front line looked like a fireworks display. A couple of haystacks were ablaze in a field. "Why do the wounded scream so much?" Julian wondered to himself. The ground rumbled ominously -- the tanks were pushing forward.

Would he die without even getting off a shot? The terror of the moment, the approaching tanks, the illuminated front line, the heavy fire: a mortal hush pervaded the scene. Julian slowly lifted his head. The tanks were visible in the near distance, still too far away for grenades to be effective. Besides, the men were out of position. He shouted to his left and his right for the men to straighten the line. There was no way they could hear him. He saw soldiers lying flat just as he had been doing a moment ago; they were so close, and yet they could not hear him. Was it possible that they all had died of fright? Finally, by screaming at the top of his lungs, he managed with Suwala's help to get the men back into line and clear the foreground of his own troops. Now they were ready. With the safety-pins pulled from their grenades, they waited for the approaching monsters. Now he could hear the first grenades going off; they fell short of the tanks. However, after the next dozen or so grenades, the tanks accelerated and veered off to the left. The men ran forward. Once again there was machine-gun fire, as well as individual rifle-shots: German infantry. "Infantry!" screamed Suwala like a man possessed. He shouted "Attack!" /14/ a second before the commander gave the order. They moved forward in extended lines with furious speed. They kept falling and picking themselves up again, shouting "Hurrah!" the way the Indians, no doubt, gave their war-whoops. They made it to the German lines. The enemy stood up; the two sides locked in hand-to-hand fighting.

Shouting, curses, faces turned bright crimson, the crack of skulls being split in two. The slaughterhouse symphony of war. Working together with Suwala, Julian swung his rifle-butt; they dealt out <their blows> at a feverish pace, but methodically just the same. Suwala fought like a madman. They thrust their way deep into the enemy's ranks; within a minute they had cleared a space all around themselves. The enemy were going down on their knees and dropping their weapons in front of them. Shit: the easier it goes, the more there is of it. A huge German was grappling with Suwala; their arms and rifles were all tangled together. Julian took careful aim and struck, and Suwala smiled wide in gratitude. A moment later Suwala repaid him with a terrible blow to the skull <?> a revolver at Julian and some non-cons. Suwala smiled. After a couple of minutes the enemy force was surrounded and disarmed. But nothing was enough to make up for the casualties that the tanks had inflicted earlier.

The firing died down. The burning haystacks lit up a memorable scene. The screams of the wounded and the groans of the dying: this was no movie, complete with musical score, about war; this was the dreary, stinking reality. Out of a company that half an hour earlier had numbered more than two hundred men, not quite three squads could now be mustered. With some difficulty they managed to scrape up a few carts from a nearby village. They gathered up the lightly wounded cases. The carts turned out to be too small, and each could barely accommodate six or seven of the unfortunate

men. It took a herculean effort of will for Julian to fight down the urge to throw up. His own uniform stank; it was spattered with blood and human entrails. The badly wounded men were left on the battlefield. With the enemy possibly close by, haste was imperative. In fact, they had barely made it back to the highway, where they re-formed in battalions, when the enemy renewed the tank assault.

The same thing was repeated for several days and nights in succession. There would be no trace of the German infantry. They had to forget about getting any rest or sleep. Everywhere they went there would be spies who relayed their positions [to the Germans]. The planes would swoop down on their low bombing runs, and fly off unscathed after completing their bloody work. The tank attacks were worse, much worse. They had no anti-tank guns. General Borkowski's army was cut off, its lines of communication severed. The splendid troops of the Wielkopolska regiments were kept in the dark about this. Only a few high-ranking officers were aware of the situation.

/15/ Without a murmur the army went up against the tanks and to its slaughter. They marched without respite, night and day, harassed by enemy fire and exhausted by the uneven struggle. They lived off raw vegetables straight from the fields. The wounded were consigned to their deaths, for lack of transport. Field doctors and medics made titanic efforts to get the lightly wounded back on their feet. After being "repaired while you wait," these soldiers would march with

the rest of their units and take part in skirmishes with the enemy. Who can say where the limits of human endurance lie? How was it possible for people to march for a dozen days without a break -- harassed by machine-gun fire and bombs, deprived of food and sleep, and with their feet a mass of festering sores? All it took was the tiniest spark of hope, which the commanders fed to them from time to time, and the gray dirty crippled units would take on a jaunty and menacing appearance. "The worse, the better," Suwala liked to say. His red beard gave him a certain resemblance to the Devil. After each engagement he would check himself and Julian for wounds, and was amazed when they once again had come through the ordeal untouched. They were an inseparable pair. Wherever Julian went Suwala was like his shadow. The giant fellow had come to feel a warm affection for the resilient cadet. They carried on lengthy conversations and discussions between them <during> the tedious marches. By now Suwala had learned to swallow calmly the commanders' comforting little pills, which were intended for the less intelligent soldiers. Their faces were dejected and somber, terribly emaciated and pale, and overgrown with beards; their sunken eyes gazed apathetically. Day by day the death-toll rose. Their feet swelled to incredible proportions, their gums bled and their teeth were falling out. Suwala no longer got upset about the lies meant to raise the army's spirits. The highly elusive German infantry filled him with rage, and like most of the men he could not understand what was going on. He was in the

habit of pestering Julian with questions. Where are the Polish fighter-planes? Where are the anti-aircraft batteries? Is the whole army having to fight like this? Julian would have liked to know the answers to these questions himself. He had taken part in some short briefings, at which he had, it was true, learned that they were cut off and that the complete encirclement of General Bortnowski's<?> army was only a matter of time.

/16/ He could not share this intelligence with Suwala, so he would put him off, usually with a joke. Subtly changing the subject, he would draw the big man out on the subject of his personal life. And so for the tenth time Suwala would tell him about his petite young wife and four-year-old Bogusław.

The 10th Battalion occupied positions in a natural trench, with their backs to a highway lined with trees. A little ways in front of the line they had placed some camouflaged machine-guns. These were the squads commanded by Karol Tomaszewski. He could be seen moving about among the men, adjusting the branches that concealed the machine-guns. He finished up and withdrew stealthily back towards the road. He sought out Suwala's ruddy head with his eyes. A moment later he and Julian exchanged greetings, even though they had seen each other only a few hours earlier.

"So how are things, Mr. Suwala?" he said, addressing the big man and shaking his hand. "Are we winning the war, or what?" Karol always found Suwala's wrath entertaining.

"How can we win when you never fire those machine-guns of yours?" he snapped back.

"Well, today, even if we get a lot of tanks, we'll manage," answered Karol in a serious tone.

"We'll see about that," said Suwala, offended.

"I really mean it, Suwala," Tomaszewski assured him. "We have a full array of heavy machine-guns, anti-tank guns behind us, and our artillery back in the rear."

Suwala's eyes glittered with satisfaction.

"Why didn't you tell me?" he said to Julian reproachfully.

"I didn't say anything because I figured you could see for yourself that we had artillery in the rear. An old soldier like you should have been able to notice that the signal corps has strung up telephone lines. I doubt they're there for us to hang ourselves from."

The telephone, located a few dozen meters away, kept ringing again and again.

"Just once I'd like to get at those sons-of-bitches with my bayonet," sighed the redhead wistfully. "When I was getting ready to leave for the front, my Stefcia said to me, 'Remember, Andrzej, you're leaving a wife and child behind with no one to take care of them. I know that you're going to the front, but do try to come back. We'll be waiting for you.' I love her and the little one, too, but I can see that we're not going to make it. Too many of us are going down. And when I think about getting killed by one of those God-

damned shooting boxes, it just makes my blood boil. I'll bet you we get some German infantry too this time around."

/17/ As if to confirm his words, the telephone operator reported that an order had come down to get the men ready. Tomaszewski ran to join his squad. They waited like this for a couple of hours, which the infantrymen employed to bandage and patch up their feet. Suwala tore up a spare pair of trousers to make bandages. He wrapped his feet thoroughly, then adjusted the gun-rest he had made from chunks of turf. He was obviously filled with emotion by the gravity of the moment. Just after he stood up to pluck away some blades of grass that obstructed his line of sight, a muffled boom hurled him back into the ditch. Julian burst out laughing uncontrollably. It was an enemy artillery shell. What the hell were they up to now? A few moments later the bombardment began in earnest; shells rained down and sent up clods of earth a few hundred meters from their positions. The telephonist reported this fact to the rear. Now the Polish artillery opened up in reply -- short of the target. The machine-gun emplacements were hit by shells from their own side. The German artillery was fast getting the range, dropping shells a few hundred meters in front of, or beyond, the highway. The Polish artillery was zeroing in, but on its own troops. There were casualties, killed and wounded, already. Repeated phone calls were to no avail. Meanwhile German tanks appeared on the horizon and began to lay down a heavy fire. Julian became more and more agitated. He got in

touch with the company commander, and received the laconic reply: "Keep your men at the ready, and wait for orders."

"So how do things stand, sir?"

"Like shit," replied Julian, upset. "I'm supposed to wait until our own artillery turns us into hamburger, got it?"

"Yes, sir," Suwala answered automatically.

The German artillery had already groped its way to the road, and was now hitting it with well-aimed shots. Trees were burning now; a few of them toppled over pinning some soldiers lying prone underneath. The Polish artillery was hitting its own infantry with no less accuracy. The tanks kept coming closer and closer. It was impossible to return their fire, what with the artillery sowing devastation and panic. Julian fatalistically lit a cigarette and passed it to Suwala.

"Let's have a smoke before we die," he joked.

Then the telephonist relayed the order: full-scale assault. A shudder ran down Julian's spine -- how was he to lead the men out of the ditch under such heavy fire? /18/ Suwala was watching his commander; he understood what the latter was thinking, and felt the same way. Julian clenched his jaws.

"Ready!" he shouted to left and right, raising his hand to get the men's attention. Julian paused for a moment, so that Suwala could go first. He jumped out of the ditch and immediately crumpled like a rag. His head dug a furrow in

the earth. Julian pulled him back by the legs. There was a bloody red spot on his forehead. "Hold your ground!" he gurgled, and grew stiff. Julian had seen so many corpses already, but it seemed as though he only now felt the terror of death for the first time. He jumped out of the ditch to catch up with his men. The fire was horrific. To make matters worse, a couple of enemy planes had shown up and were swooping low to strafe with their machine-guns. Despite terrific losses the infantry pressed forward. Suddenly a wave of firing opened up on the left flank. In addition to the artillery fire coming from the enemy and from their own side, now their own infantry was shooting at them by mistake from the left -- not to mention the planes overhead and the tanks right in front of them. Julian hopscotched forward in broad leaps; the palm of his right hand was bleeding copiously, but he felt no pain. They kept advancing steadily. Only a few were still following the prescribed tactic, useless here, of falling to the ground. It was better to skip the effort of going down and then having to haul oneself back up again under a full pack. At one point he caught up with Tomaszewski. They exchanged meaning glances, and simultaneously dropped to the ground to <?>.

"I see you got it in the hand," yelled Karol hoarsely to Julian. "You should slap a bandage on it."

"It's nothing. I don't even feel it. You know, Suwala just got killed. We're all in for it -- we'll never make it out of this fire alive."

Karol leaned his head a little towards Julian, and at the same moment a bullet passed through his neck. A fountain of blood gushed forth. Karol's blue eyes gazed into Julian's for a second, then his head sank heavily to the ground. His useless helmet rolled a meter away, and lay there like an empty pot. Julian, feverish and barely conscious a moment ago, immediately <?>. He swiftly turned Karol over on his back, took a field-dressing out of his pocket, and fashioned a plug out of a bandage. Gritting his teeth, he jammed it deep into the hole on the left side of the neck. Karol opened his pain-dilated eyes. They were now just /19/ like the eyes of his nineteen-year-old fiancée, Zosia, thought Julian despairingly. These reflections in no way hindered him from thinking about how to save his companion in misfortune. He carefully looked around. "There's no other way," he thought. "I'll have to carry him to the ditch by the road." Throwing down his pack, he grabbed hold of the unconscious Karol, flung him over his shoulders and headed back, bent over, towards the ditch. He encountered Konski, running up.

"What are you doing?" he asked sharply.

"It's Karol," replied Julian, after a moment's <hesitation>.

"Toss him in the ditch. We'll come back to get him if we can," Koński said and ran on.

Julian tended the now-unconscious Karol solicitously in an effort to make him comfortable in the ditch. The

temporary plug was completely soaked with blood. He wrapped Karol's neck with a new bandage, trying not to pull it too tight. He placed a haversack full of grenades under the man's head. Karol, seemingly lucid, opened his eyes for a moment. Julian had the impression of being thanked by the blue sky. "I did everything I could," Julian thought out loud, "and in the space of two hundred meters I have lost two friends. 'Oh lady war, where is your charm?'" he hummed to himself. Anyone who saw him at this moment, with his glowing eyes and scorched lips would have taken him for a drunkard. Catching up with his company, he headed straight to where he could hear the now-familiar shouts of "Hurrah!" "Hurrah!" he yelled like a savage Indian. There was German infantry present. "I'll teach you!" he roared, swinging his rifle-butt blindly. "That's for Suwala, that's for Karol, hurrah!" he screamed until he was so hoarse that he could only mumble in time with his swings.

The attack was over. Julian looked like a butcher at a bungled slaughter. Where had his helmet gotten to? His hair, all sticky with blood and sweat, glistened in the rays of the sun. He threw down his rifle and ran back to the road where he had left Karol to tell him he had avenged his suffering. He jumped down into the ditch, took a drunken spill, and tried to get up from the ground, but his legs would not obey him. He made his way along the ditch on his knees like a pilgrim. When he reached the spot where he had laid Karol, he fainted. In place of the blue-eyed youth he

had left there just minutes before, there lay Karol's decapitated body.

/20/ After lying in a swoon for a couple of hours, Julian was awakened by the evening chill and the measured tramp of troops marching along the highway. He hauled himself sluggishly up from the ground. He looked around with a haggard expression in his eyes. In a single instant he relived the Gehenna of a few hours earlier. Clambering out of the ditch, he staggered over to join the marching columns. During the next couple of days and nights there was no improvement in the situation. The infantry was mauled in turn by artillery, airplanes and tanks. General Bortnowski's<?> command was now decisively surrounded; their attempts to break out of the ring were repulsed with heavy losses. Ever since Julian had lost sight of his commander, Koński, clashes occurred with mounting frequency. Companies and battalions had to regroup several times a day. As a result Julian continuously had new men under him and new superior officers. There were instances where even small detachments had to fight it out on their own.

One day Julian and his platoon had taken up a position in a woods to secure the flank of a battalion marching down the highway. A powerful <?> compelled it to halt in the woods. A large number of planes strafed the road and bombarded the woods. In a split-second the woods caught fire in several places. Trees and people were falling down. Crazy horses ran about the woods dragging driver-less

munitions wagons and broken harnesses. Julian observed the woods, the sun's rays breaking through the tree-branches, and the flames that vied with the sunbeams. The screams of the wounded no longer had any effect on him. For some inexplicable reason Julian felt more pity for the horses. They ran around in circles among the trees until they were hit by a bullet or became entangled in their harness, or until their wagons got wedged between two tree-trunks. They would stand and paw the ground frantically with their hooves. Their distended nostrils and temples glistening with sweat imparted a singular beauty to these noble creatures. Just then a frightened pair of horses ran past Julian, pulling a small peasant cart. One of the rear wheels got hooked on a tree, which snapped and stopped the horses in their tracks. Julian's curiosity was aroused by the sound of moaning coming from the cart. On top of a cartload of sardine cans lay a wounded soldier. He had a wound in his left leg the size of a saucer.

"Brother, you sure look odd lying there with hundreds of thousands of sardine cans all around you."

/21/ "Water," moaned the wounded man, his eyes wild with pain.

"There isn't a drop of water around." The wounded man understood, but his lips whispered something, and there was a look of entreaty in his eyes. Julian climbed into the cart, which was being rocked this way and that by the struggling horses. He got back down and unhitched them. They ran a few

paces, overjoyed at their moment of freedom, and then stood still in perplexity, dejected, belonging to nobody.

Evidently they regretted their new-found freedom, which they did not know what to do with. It turned out that the wounded man had some water in <a canteen?>, but was lying with his whole weight on top of it, and was unable to get it out. After the first few gulps, his head cleared and he could talk.

"As a reward for my good deed, I'll just take a couple cans of sardines." The wounded man grinned with approval as Julian took a few steps back, drew out his bayonet, <?> a tin and struggled to open it. He struck it right on the edge, from which squirted thick olive oil such as he had not tasted in a long time. He raised the tin to his lips, tilted his head back and sucked up the rich oil. He saw the sky shining overhead through the tree-branches; he could feel the savory liquid flowing down his throat and into his stomach. All of a sudden he felt a terrible blow to his back, followed by searing pain. The sky began to go around, and he fell flat on his face, driving his bayonet up to the hilt into the ground. Julian struggled not to lose consciousness.

"So this is how I'm going to die," he thought. "And just when it looked as though I just might make it. You were wrong, mama, when you told me as we said good-bye that you had no evil premonitions. Your son is dying."

The scorching pain became more and more intense, as if he were being branded with a hot iron. He still did not know

what it was that had walloped him in the back. "Aha, I can't feel a thing in my legs. Probably my feet have been blown off." He tried to get up, but couldn't raise his torso; he really could not feel his legs. At last he managed to reach a little ways behind his back; he could not discover anything but his hand came back smeared with blood. A pair of frantic horses came rushing straight towards Julian with a disabled wagon clattering behind them. Julian desperately struggled to move to one side, but it was no use; he could not get his inert body to budge. The horses were close now, he could already just about feel their stertorous breath. He shut his eyes, pressed his head to the ground and passed out. /22/ The horses ran between two trees growing close together, the wagon got stuck, and they came to a stop pawing the earth a pace away from where Julian was lying. The incessant burning pain in his back woke Julian up. He opened his eyes and was astonished to find himself still alive.

The woods were on fire in a few places; the bombardment was continuing without let-up. Julian joined the chorus of wounded men, pleading desperately for help. He shouted till he was hoarse. He did not believe that help was coming, but it made him feel better just the same. The bombing tapered off. Now the woods were in flames and filled with the shrieks of the dying and the wounded. Those who were unhurt lay still, awaiting their fate. No sooner did the bombing cease than they took to their heels to escape from this cemetery for the half-dead. They ran past furtively, deaf to

the pleas of those who had been, an hour earlier, their still-hearty comrades. Julian bitterly contemplated the deserters as they scurried among the trees. He strained to see whether he might recognize some familiar face and call the man by name. Suddenly he saw a corporal running towards him. He became still, lying in ambush. Tensing the muscles of his arms, he waited until the man was near, <?>, and the runner tripped. Julian held on for dear life as the enraged corporal struggled to get free.

"I don't want anything from you," he said feverishly, holding the other man fast by the legs. "Please, just look and tell me where and how I'm wounded."

"All right, all right," the corporal relented. "Just let go of my legs, and then I'll have a look." He knelt down and bent over Julian, who held his breath in fear of what the diagnosis would be. Taking a knife from his pocket, the man gently cut Julian's belt and lifted up the skirt of his uniform. He cut the trousers apart, mopped up the wound with the hem of Julian's shirt, and pronounced his verdict. "You've been hit in the spine. It's a small hole, nothing much. Try and stand up."

"I can't. I can't feel anything in my legs," said Julian plaintively. The corporal felt Julian's legs with his hands, moved one leg and then the other, and pinched them. Getting no reaction from Julian, he stood up with the intention of leaving. He was muttering something under his

breath. To make matters worse, the wounded were calling out from all directions to the man they supposed was a medic.

"Thank you," said Julian. He had one more request, and stopped the man more with his gaze than his words. /23/

"Would you get my Fis out from under me?"

A shudder passed over the corporal's intelligent and animated face. Grinding his teeth, he cautiously pulled the Fis out from under Julian's stomach, cut the straps, and hesitantly handed the revolver to him.

"Don't do anything stupid, sir," he said softly in a quavering voice.

"Why the hell should I go on suffering? I'm grateful to you. I'll have a smoke, if you've got any matches on you." He drew out his gray enamel cigarette-case and offered the corporal a cigarette.

Taking a drag on his cigarette, Julian said, "Don't let me hold you up, corporal. You were off to someplace a moment ago. You better get running before it's too late. In a few minutes the whole woods will be up in flames."

The corporal, who had sat down to smoke his cigarette, was wrestling with himself and wondering how to help this splendid young cadet. He wanted somehow to preserve the life of this one wounded man at least, who was facing death by fire, loss of blood, or a slug from his own pistol. Once again the corporal uncovered Julian's back and pushed his pants down. Muttering to himself, he poured some water out of his canteen and washed the wound, this time thoroughly.

"Well, I'll be," he said. "You've been hit half a centimeter from the spine. I can see a piece of shrapnel sticking out. What the hell's the matter with you? I've seen people walking around with bigger wounds, while you just lie there like a log." He was getting more and more exasperated. "Try to get up."

"No, corporal," Julian smiled indulgently. "The shell fragment you can see must have damaged some of my vertebrae, leaving my legs paralyzed. "Leave my backside in peace. You've still got time to get away," said Julian in a jocular tone of voice. He was grasping the hand of the corporal, who was on the point of yielding to his insistence. The woods were engulfed in flames, and the smoke made the corporal's eyes smart, yet Julian's fiery gaze held the tormented man like a magnet.

"You want to help me, right?" When the other man nodded twice, he went on: "You say the fragment is sticking out? Well, then, pull it out."

The corporal, his lips pale, murmured defensively, "But how?"

"Show me your hand." Julian pointed at the man's swarthy begrimed hand with its powerful fingernails, and went on, "Use a pocket-knife to make it easier. But you'll have to kneel on top of me and work fast."

Julian gave the corporal a searching look.

"Don't worry about me. Either it'll work or it won't. I've got nothing left to lose."

/24/ The corporal thought it over for another moment. He freed his sleeve from Julian's grasp, took a step back and instantly struck Julian in the jaw with all his might. Julian moaned and his head slumped gently. Satisfied with the results of his improvised anesthetic, the corporal took out his pocket-knife, cleaned it carefully and, pale with emotion, cautiously inserted the sharp knife-tip a centimeter deep between the fragment and the <edge of> the wound. With his sturdy thumbnail he grasped the opposite side of the splinter and pulled on it. No such luck: his thumbnail kept slipping off. He pushed the knife deeper at the very moment that his patient came to, howling frantically. The determined corporal paid no attention. Rather than withdrawing the knife, he thrust it in even deeper. Using the blade as a wedge, he poked a finger deep into the wound and began tugging on the splinter. Julian screamed through clenched teeth in time to the corporal's movements. Finally he extracted an oblong piece of shrapnel. Blood spurted from the wound, but the pain had diminished. The corporal put a field-dressing on the wound, laid a pad on top of the dressing and wound a bandage around Julian's waist, turning him over as he did so. He worked quickly and dexterously. He had to hurry; the smoke and the heat were becoming intolerable. He tied two clumsy knots and, still kneeling, gave Julian a slap on the back.

"Well, now you're <?>. What are you laughing at?" he asked, standing up. Julian's face and eyes were full of genuine merriment.

"Let me shake your hand," he replied, holding out his own hand to the astonished corporal. "Help me stand up, Mr. Surgeon. I have feeling in my legs." He actually got up onto his feet and swayed there clinging with his whole weight to his savior. The pain made him grimace, but he fell into step leaning with all his strength against his corporal's shoulder. Guiding him carefully along, the corporal had the look of a mother who had found a lost child, injured but alive. They walked faster and faster. They had to -- whole sections of the woods were ablaze. Smoke and burning branches created impenetrable barriers that forced them to keep changing direction. They wandered around like this for some time. The woods clearly were beginning to thin out, but there was no way to exit from them. Julian could barely drag himself along, and clung heavily to the corporal's shoulder. The latter could hardly breathe; he sensed that if they did not get out of the woods immediately, he was about to die along with his miraculously rescued <companion>.

/25/ The edge of the woods <?> sunshine to left and right; and the highway. They made another attempt from a different direction, and finally came to a clearing. They fought their way for a few hundred meters more and made it, half-dead, into the fresh air.

"I'll be damned if I ever thought we'd get out of that hell-hole alive. You almost paid with your life for helping me."

"How are you feeling?"

"I'm all right. If you could find me a stick, I could walk without your help." Julian was outfitted with a skillfully trimmed tree-branch.

After an hour's march, the corporal declared a halt in a dark little half-burned cottage beside the road. Julian had been longing to rest for some time past, but not wanting to be a burden to his companion he had kept silent and walked on, even though he could feel his bandages getting soaked with blood and warm liquid trickling down his buttocks.

Why the hell should they plod on, God only knows where, the corporal wanted to know? Getting no response from Julian, who was preoccupied with fixing his bandages, he went on: "If we have to die, this is as good a place as any." They exchanged impressions. Corporal Mazurek could not help wondering what regiment the cadet was from.

"The 57th. Allow me to introduce myself. My name's Traube."

"I'm from the 55th," Corporal Mazurek replied, mimicking Julian's courtesy. They laughed out loud like two old friends.

"So what do we do now? I could eat a horse."

"I can offer you an elegant *Vorspeise*. I have a can of French sardines. Now if there was just someplace we could draw our bread rations -- but I suppose there isn't."

"Allow me to do the honors. we'll have it with a cigarette."

Following this little feast, they held a brief council and decided they would trudge on till they found some inhabited place where they might be able to link up with some unit or other. Before they set out, Mazurek got out his field-dressings and replaced Julian's bandages. Julian walked with some difficulty. He was tormented by the pain from the injured fingers of his right hand. The dirty wounds had stopped bleeding and scabbed over, but the stinging pain was worse than that from the open wound in his lower back. They marched along for a couple of hours in this fashion.

It was warm, and the glow of dusk gilded the tops of the trees along their route. The road led uphill. For a change, they turned off onto a farm path that led to a small woods. /26/ A few hundred meters farther on, some farm buildings loomed ahead: a few barns and a couple of outbuildings, all dominated by a white-plastered manor house. Soldiers could be seen gesturing from the windows of the house. In front of it stood an assortment of vehicles: hay-wagons, munitions-wagons, ordinary peasant carts, automobiles of all sizes -- out of gasoline, as they found out later.

"It looks like a village inn. Let's go see what kind of accommodations there are."

They went inside. There the newcomers beheld a sight that made them think they must be dreaming. On tables, beds, wardrobes and all the other furniture -- everywhere but on the floor -- sat a host of soldiers feasting on a variety of tasty delicacies. Mazurek and Julian nudged each other significantly. The same scene was repeated on the second floor. They sat down unobtrusively on the floor next to a dandy with platoon commander's rank, who was cradling a five-kilogram canned ham and a haversack full of hardtack between his legs. For some time they watched as the chubby-faced platoon leader sliced off huge hunks of ham and, ignoring the dribbling fat, crammed them into his mouth, which he held lazily yet gracefully tilted back. With his eyes Mazurek followed the movements of the dirty sun-bronzed hand wielding the knife. He watched as the knife cut off a large piece and jabbed it; he watched as the slice rose slowly upward and then disappeared down the platoon leader's gaping mouth. Each time this happened Mazurek swallowed hard. He was shaken out of this trance by Julian, who whispered, "Mazurek, don't stare at him so greedily. There must be a supply of that stuff around here someplace. They're all eating as if they were possessed."

Mazurek was seized by the spirit of enterprise.

"Mr. platoon leader, sir," he said in an ingratiating tone. "Where might we pick up a can like that one?"

"The wagons in front of the house are full of the stuff," replied the other, without pausing in his pleasurable

occupation. A moment later Julian and Mazurek were indistinguishable from the rest of the company.

The warm summer breeze waged a losing battle with the stuffiness in the jam-packed rooms. In the distance artillery guns rumbled time after time; the rattle of machine-guns could be heard far off. New arrivals kept coming and joining in the feast. The supplies were seemingly inexhaustible. Julian and Mazurek dozed. They were torn from this blissful semi-reverie by the sound of shouting voices. The scene had been transformed. The crowded room now had the look of a meeting. In the general uproar it was hard to make out what all the commotion was about. Some were trying to shout down the rest. The kept it up for about half an hour, until they were hoarse and covered with sweat. Tension was mounting; hardly anyone understood what was going on. Mazurek became infected with the mood and began to bang on the floor with his bayonet-handle, calling for silence. He was seconded by others, and after pounding rhythmically on the floor and the walls for a few moments, they succeeded in silencing the others. Shouts of "Quiet!" and "Silence!" prevailed over the din of voices. Taking advantage of the interval of silence, Julian began energetically asking questions. In a matter of moments they found out where things stood. The last soldier to arrive had brought some news; he was a platoon leader and career soldier from a machine-gun unit. Taking the floor, he laid out the

situation as if he were lecturing a bunch of raw recruits in basic training.

"The Germans have us completely surrounded. There's no hope of breaking out. Our units are surrendering one after the other. Fighting is still going on around Ilowo, but they'll have to capitulate there, too. I saw white flags on a lot of buildings. In my opinion the situation is hopeless, but one thing is sure: we have to fight to the bitter end. There are worse ways to die than from a bullet. We're not going let ourselves be slaughtered like sheep. Let's make a stand! We have plenty of ammunition."

The room reverberated with the sound of shouting voices. A few others took their turns to speak. Most were in favor of putting up a fight. There were some who gave good reasons for being opposed, but they were shouted down by the majority. They were not going to hoist the white flag. They had enough food and ammunition.

Julian huddled with Mazurek for a moment, and then spoke up.

"Listen, men. We've decided to defend ourselves. We have a dozen ammunition wagons, we've got food, and there's water in the taps. Let's barricade the doors and windows with mattresses and furniture -- there's plenty -- and wait for help to come. If it doesn't, and the Germans show up, we'll give them the welcome they deserve."

"He's right! He's right! That's the stuff!"

"Before we set up the barricades, those who have a different opinion about what we should do can leave the house. /27/ We'll give them ten minutes. Those who are staying will start immediately unloading the weapons, ammo and provisions from the wagons. I am assuming command together with Platoon Leader Wojcik and Corporal Mazurek. Wojcik, Mazurek, go out to the courtyard and make sure that those who leave don't take any of the wagons with them. Under no circumstances are they to take anything we might need."

Julian dragged himself over to the window to watch Wojcik and Mazurek energetically carrying out his orders. The men were infused with new spirit. In a few minutes the ammunition-boxes and provisions were unloaded from the wagons. The horses were unharnessed and the vehicles pushed up against the wall of the house to form a barrier. The men who had opposed the idea of fighting wandered indecisively from room to room. The majority <got caught up in the spirit of things> and pitched in. In ten minutes' time the two-story building had been converted into a fortress, its windows and doors all barricaded. One heavy machine-gun was placed on the roof, another on the ground floor. Dozens of rifle-barrels, invisible from the outside, were in position ready to open fire. Traube, Wojcik and Mazurek divided up the responsibilities among themselves. Julian was in overall command; Wojcik was second-in-command and in charge of the second floor; Mazurek took the ground floor. Sentries were

posted in watches at the windows on the roof. A wide sofa was designated as headquarters, with the staff officers on the floor in front of it. The weary men slept right on the floor. There were only three sentries on duty. Consumed with fever, Julian fell into a restless sleep. He overheard Mazurek telling Wojcik about the operation he had performed on Julian to remove the shrapnel a while back.

"One way or another, we're going to die and wind up dead meat," said Wojcik after hearing the account.

The night passed without incident. At dawn the sentry on the roof reported units marching along the edge of the woods. A German infantry platoon was approaching. They were visible coming up in route-step three abreast. For a couple of minutes they were concealed behind a copse that blocked them from view. Catching sight of the farm buildings, they instantly fanned out into an extended line and approached with weapons drawn. They were greeted, prematurely, by a hail of bullets from every opening [in the house walls]. The dead and wounded fell; the survivors, after a moment of reflection, withdrew stealthily back to the stand of trees. An hour later the Germans had surrounded the house and were subjecting it to a heavy machine-gun barrage. Having learned their lesson from the initial skirmish, Julian, Wojcik and Mazurek kept the men on alert but forbade them to discharge their weapons. They held their fire, even after the besieging forces opened up with howitzers. The walls of the house shook slightly; two shells came through the windows but

caused no injuries. The house was as silent as a tomb. Wojcik kept running to the doors <?> /28/ on the roof to assess the situation.

"The bastards are shooting from all sides. I've told the boys to wait for the order to open fire."

"I can barely hold my men back. They're running out of patience," complained Mazurek.

"If they don't set the place on fire, we'll let them get real close and then we'll let them have it."

All at once the house shook and the house groaned. Something had slammed into the roof. Everyone rushed upstairs. Julian seemingly forgot about his lower back, which had been causing him to wince at the slightest movement. They made their way to the little attic, where they had earlier taken off some of the roofing and set up a heavy machine-gun. A howitzer shell had killed the gun-layer and seriously wounded his assistant in the head. He lay there groaning softly. In front of the house there had been no change.

"I think they're closer, but still a little bit too far away if we want to give it to them good. Mazurek, send two of your men upstairs to man the machine-gun. We've got one man down."

"We can hold out for a few more hours, don't you think, Traube?" asked Mazurek, giving Julian a friendly pat on the shoulder. "That is, if they don't send a little birdie full

of pellets our way. I'm surprised they didn't start with that."

Everything stayed the same for another hour. The Germans kept up a steady fire, inflicting no casualties. They moved forward, but so slightly that disputes even broke out among the defenders, some of whom heatedly insisted that the Germans were not one step closer than before. But this was not the case: they had gradually closed in, especially on the west side of the house. The defenders decided to wait until the bulk of the attackers had moved into a plowed field. This happened sooner than they expected. The Germans, apparently convinced that the silent manor house was deserted, began moving warily but with greater speed and confidence. Julian and Wojcik, their faces pale with emotion, studied the situation on the forward perimeter from every angle. They exchanged hesitant looks, then suddenly shouted "Fire!" at the same time. Scores of rifle-barrels roared; the machine-guns began to rattle; the ground floor joined in. The whole house turned into a fountain of gunfire. They exchanged fire for a dozen hours. The house shook from the rifle blasts and the shells that slammed into it. The men used wet rags to try to cool down their hot rifle-barrels.

/29/ Packing paper from the munitions boxes was steadily piling up; the boxes themselves were nearly empty. They were running out of ammunition. The three commanders ran doggedly up and down the stairs. "In a few minutes they'll drag us

out and kill us like dogs," thought Julian. He was doubly anxious: for the first time since the outbreak of the war, he was conscious of the fact that he was a Jew -- a Jew who was about to fall into the hands of the Germans. Though he was half-awake and his body ached with pain, this thought forced its way into his mind like a bothersome fly. Worn out by the constant running to and fro and the incessant noise, the three men flopped onto the sofa.

"A little while ago the idea of surrendering was outrageous, but in a few minutes' time we're going to have to do it. If they don't put us out of our misery, we can look forward to a few years of German imprisonment." There was a note of despair in Julian's voice. "Say what you like, but we did a pretty good job. We mowed down dozens of Krauts, while losing [only] two men."

"That's just great. For that the worms'll be gnawing on you very shortly. Either that, or the lice will have you for a few years. After the war you'll get some medal of valor and be promoted to sergeant, so you can spend the next dozen years or so training recruits until the scoundrels get around to starting the next war." Mazurek was plainly bitter; all the muscles in his face were working.

"Who knows, maybe we'll still get some help. The war's only a couple of weeks old. Don't assume that everybody's in the same boat we are."

The cry "We're running out of ammunition!" came from all sides. The defenders turned their eyes towards the sofa, as

if expecting a miracle. Mazurek was nonchalantly puffing on a cigarette, Wojcik had his face hidden in his hands, and Julian gazed in front of himself with a glassy stare. Over the din of rifle-fire, which was growing more and more sporadic, could be heard the voice of one of the men who had been opposed to fighting it out. Measuring the room with broad strides, he bellowed out, "What are you still shooting for, you idiots. The white flag's already gone up on the roof." An ominous, ringing silence descended; one hothead got off a final shot. Rifles clattered on the floor as they were thrown down. The Germans waited a few minutes, and then approached with guns at the ready and grenades in hand. Halting, they made sweeping gestures with their arms while shouting, "*Her-r-r-aus!*"

/30/ They came out one by one, bewildered and uncertain. Standing obediently against the wall, they jammed their empty hands into their pockets, took them out again, and then put them behind their backs. Their bodies and hands, for several weeks now accustomed to carrying loads, felt too light and off-balance. They were surrounded by a group of seventeen-year-old boys giving orders all at once. They placed the prisoners in a single line against the wall. The difference between the two groups of soldiers was striking. The prisoners were dirty and unshaven, while their stained and crumpled uniforms of indeterminate color reinforced the impression of degradation and of the many trials they had endured. When they were searched, it turned out unexpectedly

that most of them had tens of thousands of zlotys on them. They had come across the money while breaking into the crates of food. Watches and rings disappeared instantly into the pockets of the Germans. They could not believe that they had run into such a tiny handful of men. They demanded to know the name of the commanding officer, put Julian at the head of the group and marched them away. They did not have far to go. A couple of hundred meters beyond the stand of trees they passed several huts standing on a rise. From this little rise they beheld a sight that Julian would not forget for a long time. In a great valley ringed on all sides with machine-guns stretched a gigantic camp for Polish prisoners-of-war. The new arrivals were ordered to sit down, and a single soldier was left to guard them. Julian scrutinized the people in his group; they were all equally amazed and perturbed. A moment later, Wojcik adroitly threaded his way through the crowd and came over to stand next to Julian.

"We've got to get away from this group and blend in with the others. I don't like the way they're keeping us separate from the rest. Did you ever imagine that things were going so badly for us? There must be twenty thousand men here."

"I knew it was bad, but I never thought they could have taken this many prisoners. We were winning every battle. Were you at Kutno?"

"Sure was. The Germans took off and ran three times. We took our share of beatings though. Anyway, we're just cannon-fodder -- what do we know?"

A couple of automobiles carrying senior officers drove up. Julian and Wojcik took advantage of the slight commotion to edge cautiously away from their group. Some of the prisoners drew up their legs to make room for the newcomers. From a gloomy bearded lieutenant in the reserves they learned that this camp /31/ had been filling up with new groups of prisoners for two days running. So far they had not received a single bite to eat. A couple of times, for a joke, the Germans brought a loaf of bread, cut it into tiny pieces and tossed them out as if they were feeding a pack of dogs. They found it quite amusing to watch the hungry men fighting over some infinitesimally small scrap of bread. Julian stretched out comfortably on the ground, with his head resting on Wojcik's side, and fell asleep. He dreamt about his mother, her eyes full of tears and despair, as she whispered in a tremulous voice, "Don't pay any attention to my tears. I don't have any evil premonitions."

The sky had cleared. The sun was shining and there was a light breeze. The Polish army marched along, winding like an endless snake. This was no longer an army; it was a listless troupe of beggars. Stripped of their belts and their weapons, they shuffled along, calling forth tears from hundreds of peasants, who stood in front of their huts with buckets of water, carrots and turnips. In each of the soldiers the women and the old men saw, with their tear-reddened eyes, their own sons. The sun was already high in the sky; they were being herded along, with short breaks, at

a steadily increasing pace. After each break there would be a few who could not stand up. Bringing up the rear was an automobile mounted with two machine-guns, followed by a smaller automobile, which had the onerous assignment of dealing with stragglers. Whenever they saw a prisoner lingering after a rest-stop, they would come up from behind and send him to his eternal reward with a well-placed shot to the back of the head. There were more and more stragglers every kilometer. Oblivious to their fate, several who lacked the strength to move their exhausted bodies any farther stayed behind after each break. The heat and dust were unendurable. Towards evening they reached Żyrardów. The enormous market square in Żyrardów could barely contain the twenty thousand POWs. A few thought about trying to escape, but the powerful cordon with its numerous machine-gun barrels staring them in the face instantly nipped this idea in the bud. They were so listless, hungry and tired that at the command, "Sit!" the throng of men fell to the ground as if they had been mown down with scythes. For a couple of hours now Julian, who was running a high fever, had been delirious. It was a miracle that he had managed to drag himself along and reach Żyrardów with the rest of them. He collapsed in the square like a dead man, pressing his cheek against a cobblestone. /32/ The dirty stone lent a pleasant sensation of coolness to his burning cheek.

A few kilometers beyond Żyrardów the road improved somewhat. Hundreds of military vehicles blocked half of the

road in an interminable line. The prisoners marveled at the superb equipment the Germans possessed. Where had our intelligence service been? How could they have gone to war with such a well-armed adversary? <The rank-and-file soldiers in their amazement treated the war as if it had been served up to them on a platter. They were forgetting the chefs of the previous war, the grits cooked up by Zacharów and the others.> The cannon-fodder was surprised, but it marched along meanwhile like cattle on the way to its pen. "You are not going to your deaths. International law will protect you."

The German transport crew organized a pastime for themselves. A few of the more far-sighted prisoners had brought blankets with them, beautiful green woolen blankets. The Germans would stand on the running-boards of their cars searching the crowds for the fellows with blankets. A short hop into the middle of the marching ranks: a slight show of resistance: and the prize was in the arms of the victor. Finally the column of vehicles with their magnificent tires came to an end.

The light was fading, and the chill night air seeped in through the openings in their clothes. The human swarm huddled closer together. Age, rank and social status all fell by the wayside; they were bound together by common misery. All of them were sick, all of them shaking with fever. They dreamt of a warm clean bed, a bath and a pork chop. They were dazzled by the circling spotlights that

punctuated the slowly drifting minutes at regular intervals. The scattered shots of summary executions could be heard. At the same time <Julian> Traube was walking towards a fashionable beach with the enchanting Betty at his side.

The dawn broke gray and chill. The prisoners were all blue and stiff from the cold. They were forbidden to stand up. Kneeling, they slapped their thighs and shoulders in an effort to warm themselves. Their bellies ached with hunger; there were twenty men to each cigarette. When things became so unbearable that they thought they were losing their minds, they begged fate for a change at any price -- even a change for the worse -- anything, so long as they did not have to go on sitting doubled up like this. Providence sent salvation in the form of a dozen or so German officers.

The order was passed with some difficulty through the multitudes of men. "Polish prisoners of German nationality step through the line!" For the better part of an hour the "*Volksdeutsche*" got up one after the other and proceeded to do as ordered. Some of them hesitated or were ashamed, but /33/ the majority shoved their way through the line grinning happily. The camp became less crowded now, with a sizable group of men standing outside the bristling ring of gun-barrels. They were smoking cigarettes and they received bread on the spot. They laughed merrily in their German dialect. The rest of the encampment formed up to march again.

The highway was empty. Beyond a bend in the road stood a group of non-commissioned officers wearing the yellow armbands of the Gestapo on their left sleeves. With their legs spread far apart and their arms akimbo, they rocked back and forth on their heels. The riding crops dangling from their shoulder-straps kept tempo with their movements. They lined both sides of the highway. What did they want now? -- the blankets were all gone. They were taking men out of the column and bending down to record their names. In fact, a group of prisoners could now be seen standing in ditches off in the distance. "*Juden raus-s! Juden raus-s! Jude?*" they asked, pointing at prisoners with Semitic features. Julian, who was marching on the right-hand side by the edge of the road, turned pale. A few dozen meters were all that separated him from the Germans. He felt Wojcik's searching gaze. The latter had figured out what was going on, and without a second thought switched places with Julian by yanking him bodily to the middle of the column. "Thank you," whispered Julian with emotion. They came to the spot where a tall, rough-looking redhead was standing. "*Juden raus-s! Jude?*" He was pointing at Julian as if he wanted to run him through with his index finger. Wojcik answered "no" on Julian's behalf, but Julian, giving Wojcik's hand a determined squeeze by way of farewell, jumped out of the ranks and into the ditch. There was a prolonged pause. Julian triumphantly withstood the gaze of thousands of eyes and the spreading murmur: "He's a Jew. They've taken the

Jews out of the column. He's a Jew. They've taken the Jews..."

The column passed on. Twenty-four Jews were left behind, on both sides of the highway. They were led a dozen meters or so to the side of the road, where a half-burnt cottage stood. Before the cottage were strewn the hideously mutilated and bloated carcasses of several horses. <Standing next to these, the Germans drew out their whips> and brought them down whistling onto the stooped backs of the Jews, who were to bury the carcasses. They set about digging pits. It was grueling work for those who were unaccustomed to it -- and exhausted and starving into the bargain. The sweat poured down their long-unwashed faces and made little furrows. They labored to the accompaniment of whistling whips and a hail of verbal abuse. *"Du bist Jude. Juden haben Krieg gewollt. Hast du Krieg."* /34/ A painful kick would send the victim sprawling on the ground. This went on for a good hour, until the prisoners were so tired and apathetic from being beaten, and the heat was so intense, that the executioners were forced to cut short their fun and games. By now the pits were fairly deep. Chains and ropes were brought, by means of which they labored at the herculean task of dragging the dead horses. The carcasses gave off a stench that made the men dizzy. When the pits were filled in, the red-headed brute order them to dig another one by the half-wrecked wall of the cottage. He traced a rectangle parallel to the wall with the heel of his boot. He was the

cruelest of them all, no doubt because he had been born with red hair despite his pure Aryan blood. When he had finished speaking, his face was morose, but there was a roguish glint in his eyes, with their red lashes, as he looked over the prisoners. "Verstanden?" They understood. With the same torpor as before, their limbs dead-tired, they commenced digging their own graves. Perhaps there were a few who were deluded about the purpose of this task, or who deceived themselves. Julian knew beyond a doubt. He dug with a rhythmic motion, throwing the dirt to either side. Puffing on cigarettes and swapping jokes, their German masters kept their eyes fastened on the tragic group. The men displayed greater spirit than previously; some of them worked fast and furiously as if they were in a hurry to take their places in this moist black earth. They said not a word to one another. The only one to speak was Julian's young neighbor with the delicate features and beautiful deep-set eyes. In a trembling voice and apparently on the verge of tears, he softly asked Julian, "Sir, what is this pit for? There aren't any horses left."

"You fool," he replied testily, "we're digging our own grave." Then, as if regretting what he had said, he added: "You only die once."

The Germans checked the depth of the trench with the air of engineers at a major construction-site. "That's enough," they announced. They ordered the men to stand against the wall. In no particular hurry, they observed with pleasure

the heavy slow movements of the prisoners. The latter did not have far to go. Those standing against the wall had to pull in their elbows and shoulders, but everyone managed to squeeze in. The Germans were loading their weapons with the barrels pointed upward. One of them fired into the air, ostensibly by accident. Some of the prisoners flinched, and a shudder ran through the line of men, which provoked a volley of laughter from the Germans. Their mirth cascaded until they were choking with laughter. /35/ The condemned men clenched their jaws, furious with themselves for their moment of weakness. They directed their eyes upward and prayed for it to be over quickly, prayed not to have to feel anymore. Julian observed his companions and the gleeful men in front of him. His mind was working fast; his entire life passed before his eyes with cinematic speed. He forgot where he was and what awaited him. The Germans had formed up, and the redhead was getting them into line with the pedantry befitting a German officer. A warm breeze brought the fragrance of the nearby woods and the freshly dug earth to Julian's nostrils. The figures of three horsemen could be seen riding along a country lane. Spotting the group of men, they turned towards the cottage.

"Present arms!" The redhead made his report to the portly senior officer. All Julian could make out was the word *Juden*, repeated several times. Julian made use of this interval to scribble a few parting words on the inside of his cigarette-case. "My dear parents, I die thinking of you. I

loved no one on earth more than you. Julian Traube." The newly arrived officers laughed at the witticisms exchanged by their underlings.

The ritual was started over again from the beginning. From atop their horses, the officers watched, staring into the face of each prisoner in turn. The most formidable-looking of the German officers, the stout one with the double chin and ruddy cheeks, fastened his lovely eyes on the towering erect figure of Julian. Julian's face was as beautiful as ever. He focused his gaze on the fat German, who could not bear it and turned his head to whisper something to his neighbor. The redhead was issuing orders and getting his men into line again. At this moment Julian raised his hand; in a ringing voice and in flawless German, he called out to the officers.

"I have a request."

The fat officer, astounded, beckoned Julian to approach. "Was?"

"I am going to die in a moment, and I have lost my identification tag," said Julian through clenched teeth. "With your assistance, I would like to send a brief message I have written on this cigarette-case that I received from my father before going to the front." Suddenly he went reeling to one side; the redheaded German, after watching Julian for a few moments, had flown into a rage and given him an angry kick. He ordered him to return to his place. For some inexplicable reason, the officers <?> calmed the strapping

redhead down and commanded Julian to translate the inscription in the cigarette-case. /36/ He rendered it word for word; they ordered him to add the address, and he groped for the pencil that had gotten somewhere in his pocket. He wrote down the address and as he handed it to the fat officer said, "Thank you for fulfilling the last request of a condemned man. I knew that Germans were cruel, but I had no idea that they killed wounded prisoners."

"Who is wounded?" roared the stout officer.

In reply Julian turned around and lifted the hem of his jacket and pulled up his shirttails. On his bare back could be seen a huge patch of congealed blood.

"*Du bleibst hier!*" Julian heard the decision rendered behind his back. Two more wounded men were identified. Julian could scarcely believe his ears: they were provided with an escort consisting of one non-commissioned officer, who was ordered to deliver them to the hospital in Żyrardów. They had gone several dozen meters before they realized what had just happened. Two hundred meters farther on they heard two rifle volleys, one right after the other.

"Last name: Traube. First name: Julian. Rank: platoon commander, cadet. Faith: Mosaic." At this the sister superior's broad white cornet turned towards Julian. "The Jews wanted the war," she said through compressed lips. Julian was too tired to make any reply to this withered figure with wings. He was given some coffee and bread, but the best part was the beginning of his bath. The practiced

hands of the hearty nurse undressed and scrubbed him carefully, washing away the two days' crust of blood from his festering wound. Towards the end he fainted, and was unconscious when they carried him to his bed. He sank into a morbid and feverish dream. For a couple of days he was delirious, raving and shouting in the tiny room he shared with three officers and another cadet. The whole of this time Julian could be heard shouting incoherently: "Hurrah! *Juden heraus! Jude? Hurrah!*"

After his wound had been cleaned and x-rayed, it came to light that a sizable piece of shrapnel was lodged several centimeters deep [in his back]. It would have to stay there since there was no one available to take it out. At that time the functions of both chief of ward and surgeon were performed by a single person, thirty-five-year-old Dr. Anna Kostrzewska, who, having already performed quite a number of operations, could barely hold a <scalpel> in her hand. Several hundred patients were at death's door for lack of medical /37/ supplies and staff. There was another doctor who wandered about the hospital, but he was stone-deaf and of little use except for inserting catheters.

A shaft of sunlight fell on Julian's face, and a sharp gust of wind brushed against his head as he lay face down on his pillow. For the first time in a couple of days Julian opened his eyes consciously. Moving his head, he tried vainly to roll over on his back and fell back helplessly on the pillow. "Please lie still." He heard a kindly voice

from above. "You mustn't move about." He turned his head and beheld the face of a youthful nurse with glasses perched on an impish little nose. In short order he learned from her that he was paralyzed from the waist down, and that the paralysis had set in when the remains of the first shell-fragment were being cleaned out of his wound. "For the time being you have to lie quietly on your stomach."

The next morning, when Dr. Kostrzewska heard Julian's account of how he came to be wounded, she was amazed that he had been able to withstand physical labor and marching for two or three days following the kind of operation he had undergone.

"The very fact that you regained the use of your legs immediately after the splinter was removed gives me reason to hope that when your depleted organism recovers its strength you'll get your legs back again. The x-rays don't indicate any damage to the vertebrae. Please lie quietly and don't worry about anything," she concluded in a friendly tone.

For Julian the days that followed were a time of torment and despair. It exasperated him to lie there like a log. He could not even feel it when he urinated. Although his right hand had been only slightly injured in a couple of places, dirt had gotten into the unattended wounds; as a result, the hand was swathed with bandages, which did nothing to help his mood. He was completely dependent on the vastly overworked nurses and orderlies. The Żyrardów hospital, which had about a hundred beds before the war, was now host to about four

hundred seriously wounded patients, the majority of whom had little chance of survival. Many could have been saved through the amputation of their mangled limbs, but that would have required surgeons and equipment that the hospital did not possess. The hospital staff worked past the limits of human endurance; each day they changed bandages for scores of patients and gave them the illusory hope that their wounds, whose reek grew fouler and fouler, would heal with the help of such measures. But what was really required was to cut off several dozen arms and legs.

Julian's nearest neighbors were reserve Lieutenant Tadeusz Strzałkowski, /38/ whose arm had been amputated below the elbow (one of Dr. Kostrzewska's first patients) and Lieutenant Janusz Dworakowski, who had a shattered collarbone and a broken arm that was encased in an elaborate splint. From them Julian learned about the bombing of Warsaw and the exodus of the civilian population from all the major cities of Poland. The roads were often so jammed with wagons and civilians on foot, as Strzałkowski related the story, that the army could barely squeeze through. There were dead horses and human bodies left unburied all around. Virtually all the trains had been destroyed and the rail-lines crippled.

"Those explosions you hear off in the distance -- that's Warsaw defending itself. I met some policemen who had hightailed it out of Warsaw. They told me some unbelievable things," said Strzałkowski with a sigh. "The scum were

running away instead of doing their duty. Warsaw has turned into a fortress. Zosia, our nurse, also brings us the daily news that comes over the radio. The day before yesterday she sat by your bed half the night. You were running a fever of over 40 degrees <Celsius>. [As I was saying,] Warsaw has been turned into a fortress. They've set up barricades in the streets. Mayor Starzyński addresses the populace almost non-stop. (This national hero could move people to tears with his speeches.) He's the only one who's stayed at his post."

"What about the rest of the government?" asked Julian.

"Rydz-Smigly and the entire government including the president left Warsaw during the first few days of the war." There was a distinct note of bitterness in Strzałkowski's voice. "We didn't know a thing. I could see that everything was a mess -- the lack of air defense, the breakdown in communications, and just to top it all off, hordes of spies and saboteurs -- but I never imagined it could be so bad everywhere.

The little room fell silent. They could hear, coming from the large ward next door, the moans and shrieks of men in pain.

"What about England and France?"

"Why, they declared war," replied Strzałkowski and Dworakowski together, their voices dripping with irony.

"Gentlemen," chimed in Lieutenant Kulesza, who lay next to the opposite wall. He had an ascetic-looking face covered

with a freshly grown blond beard. "There's nothing to criticize or find fault with. It's still too early and we know too little to be able to pass judgment. Now there's no denying the fact that the Germans attacked /39/ Okęcie Airfield on the first day of the war and bombed our planes, not one of which managed to get off the ground. Granted, England and France have declared war only on paper. But you can't go and <make snap judgments> about something as important as a war. Such matters require a little perspective. Let's not forget that it took a good ten years to find out even a fraction of the truth about what went on behind the scenes in the last war. Besides, things have just gotten started."

"Some start," Dworakowski shot back sarcastically, then winced audibly from pain. "I keep forgetting I have all these broken bones," he explained as he rearranged his splint. "The biggest surprise was the one the Bolsheviks sprang on us. They're carving Poland up together with the Germans, and they keep going deeper and deeper into the country. I wonder where they'll stop."

Julian listened in on the conversation trying to hide his astonishment.

"It's a dirty business, like every war," said Second Lieutenant Kolc, who had kept silent up to this point. He was a strapping fellow with a beautiful face and blazing eyes surrounded by dark lashes. The young cadet by the door lay

quiet taking no part in the conversation; he had a shattered jawbone that was supported by a specially-designed brace.

The days dragged on without no changes. There was no improvement in Julian's condition. Every other day he was taken away to be rebandaged, and came back listless and indifferent. The very thought that he might stay this way for good -- that he might have to spend the rest of his life lying there like a log -- filled him with such terror that the short-cropped hair on his head became sticky with sweat. He would lie there in mute despair for hours on end; he felt utterly useless, a worn-out rag tossed in a corner. He thought incessantly about his parents and his sister, who on his suggestion had moved to Warsaw far along in her pregnancy. He flinched and winced in pain at the sound of every distant explosion. There was a constant stream of wounded men into the hospital, where for lack of space they were placed on the floor. Countless patients died, but not enough to offset the steady influx of new ones.

Some of the patients received visits from relatives who had managed by some miracle to track them down. Kulesza was found in this way by his wife, who arrived at the hospital by sheer luck from Skierniewice. She had escaped from Warsaw and had been staying with Anielcia for the past two weeks, Mrs. Kulesza said. "Something told me you were someplace nearby. I had a dream one night that you were wounded, /40/ so I came straight to the hospital in Żyrardów and asked about you. Well, and here I am," she concluded joyfully.

"How are you, then, Karolek? How do you feel? The nurse told me that you had a gunshot wound in the chest."

"I'm all right now, dear. It's already starting to heal," said the good-looking giant, gazing affectionately at the diminutive figure of his wife. "And these are my comrades in misery." He introduced each of the other patients in turn. Aniela nodded graciously towards the beds with her blonde little head. As she was getting ready to leave that evening -- she promised her husband that she would return with some food in a few days -- Julian asked her to get in touch with his aunt in Skierniewice, whose last name was Wolkowicz. Mrs. Kulesza was more than willing to do so, and promised to return with a reply, or to bring his aunt along with her. Julian had already sent quite a few messages about his condition and whereabouts by way of civilians: to Łódź, where he had some close friends like Grisza from his university days and another aunt who lived there to Warsaw whenever he got the chance, and to Poznań. All without any results. Besides the other shortages in the hospital there was a lack of food. Anyone who could not afford the exorbitant prices for food that prevailed in the town went hungry. One was lucky to find a single solitary potato floating in the hospital's watery soup. The frequent inspections by German officers, accompanied by the doctors, did nothing to improve the patients' sorry lot. After each such visitation, rumors flew about the Germans' intentions regarding the hospital and its patients. Following one

inspection, they placed guards inside the building and outside the entrance to check on those going in or out. At the same time a report spread to the effect that the lightly wounded and convalescent patients would be discharged and sent off to internment camps. One night the patients were awakened by a disturbance in the corridor. A moment later the lights came on in all the wards and their eyes were greeted by a procession of cripples, droves of them, without arms, without legs, blackened from smoke, reddened with blood oozing from their wounds. They were refugees from Holy Spirit Hospital in Warsaw. "All of Warsaw was burning, Warsaw lay in ruins, there was no more Warsaw. They dropped demolition- and fire-bombs on our hospital. We escaped out the windows. We jumped from the upper floors." They all talked at the same time, telling their story in chaotic fashion. "The Germans have been bombarding Warsaw with planes and artillery for three days and three nights straight. /41/ Mayor Starzyński remains fearlessly at his post. There has been no water for two days."

For a moment the patients forgot about their own sufferings. The terror of fire and smoke pervaded the room. Reflecting the Gehenna they had just gone through, these tottering cripples on their bloody <stumps?> formed a compelling picture. The light of dawn <?> was already coming in through the windows, yet the questions and answers kept flying back and forth. Every one of them had a relative or a close friend in the beloved capital. No matter what street

or house they asked about, the answer was invariably the same: it is burning; it has been burnt and destroyed; it has been leveled to the ground.

The new arrivals were given straw pallets in the aisles between the beds and in the corridors. That afternoon they had a hard time waking Julian up for his regular change of bandages; he was still asleep when they wheeled him to the dressing station. The room was bustling with activity. About a dozen volunteers were at work applying iodine and ointment, and cleaning the noisome wounds. Each woman was in charge of several dozen wounded men, whose dressings were changed every other day. Thus Julian, as usual, found himself being ministered to by the skillful little fingers of Miss Zosia. Trying to seem more mature (she was barely seventeen), she put on a dignified manner and stern expression totally at odds with the merry look that flashed out from behind her glasses. She greeted Julian with a smile, patted him amiably on the shoulders and, after asking him some routine questions about his health, set about unwinding his bandages. She washed the edges of his wound and, as usual, called over Dr. Kostrzewska, who was making her rounds among the wheeled carts.

"You'll have to hold off with the bandages. The wound looks bad again. The proud flesh will have to be debrided all around." She left to have a look at the next patient; her movements were those of an automaton: the exhausting work was beyond her strength.

Julian waited his turn for an hour. New patients kept being wheeled in constantly, some moaning, some screaming, and whimpering like sick children. Zosia was the only other person in the room by the time Dr. Kostrzewska returned to Julian's wheeled table. She had to wait another moment for her instruments to arrive. The ugly circular wound with its greenish edges was visible on Julian's <śmiały> back. She had cut halfway around the circle when Julian started to howl from the pain. Kostrzewska froze for a moment, then slowly withdrew the open scissors. As if not believing her own eyes and ears, she pinched Julian hard on the buttock. They all realized what this meant at the same time; /42/ their three faces broke out in identical grins. Julian had feeling in his legs; Julian could move his legs. He and the two exhausted women were filled with boundless joy. This was the first "goal" they had scored in many long days of despair and helplessness.

From that day forward Julian began to make a rapid recovery. Soon he was able to get out of bed and hobble, with the aid of a cane, around the wards and corridors. At this time a group of convalescents was taken away to some undisclosed location. While the Germans took down the addresses of the discharged patients and assured them they were being sent home, the story went round the hospital that the patients had been shipped off to prison-camps in Germany. In Julian's little room the mood was grim. From the town came word of mass executions of Polish officers; someone

brought news from Łódź of mass arrests and executions among the intelligentsia. The Germans had entered the capital.

Lieutenant Kulesza and Julian were expecting a visit. Kulesza's wife had sent word to her husband that she would be coming at the end of the week, and would bring Mrs. Wolkowicz, Julian's aunt, with her. After one of the inspection-tours, Julian and Kulesza were put on the list of convalescents; they decided to break out of the hospital with the help of the two women. The night before the expected visit was a sleepless one. They spent it going over their plans; the hardest problem was figuring out a way to get past the hospital guards. The sun was already shining in through the tall hospital windows when the weary men turned in to get some sleep.

Into the room rolled Madame Kulesza like a little ball. She was carrying packages and greeting everyone with smiles. Behind her in the doorway stood the diffident figure of a woman in her forties. She was a rather stout brunette with regular features and a pale unblemished complexion that contrasted sharply with her black mourning clothes. Blinking in the bright light, she ran her eyes over the faces of the bedridden men. Before she had a chance to step across the threshold, Mrs. Kulesza had thrown down packages, gone up to her sleepy husband and kissed him warmly several times. Without releasing him from her embrace, she woke Julian and directed his attention to the doorway with her eyes.

"Julek, dear boy, you poor thing. Show me what's the matter with you." Questions and answers flew back and forth; his aunt had no news as to the fate of Julian's parents. "I sent a message to Łódź. Someone said that they had escaped from /43/ Poznań to Łódź. I've brought you something to eat."

Julian sank his white teeth into a juicy apple. "You look so much like mother just now." His eyes were fixed on the mourning veil around her winsome face. As if guessing the question in Julian's look, Sabina Wolkowicz said, in a soft voice brimming with despair: "They came during the night and robbed us of all our money and jewelry. They beat us and dragged us out of the house. Finally they hauled Natan away and shot him with several other lawyers and doctors." Her soft voice quavered as she fought back the tears.

Julian told her of his plans; on the other bed Kulesza was whispering the same thing to his wife.

"All right, dear, I'll send you some civilian clothes. Today I have to go back with Mrs. Kulesza, there's a wagon waiting for us. But promise me that you'll come to stay with me until you get back on your feet and hear from your family. One more thing," she said in parting, "in Żyrardów somewhere on the market square there lives a distant relative of your father's by the name of Indych. People know him in town. You won't have any trouble locating him. He might be able to help you."

The ensuing days were filled with anxiety. They expected more prisoners to be transported away from the hospital. Kulesza and Julian decided to put on civilian clothing under their uniforms and make a dash for it only after they had left the hospital. The building was heavily guarded, so there was no chance of slipping out unobserved or getting past the guard without [the proper] documents. One morning after a night of drenching rain, Julian and Kulesza took their departure from the little room in an officer-likier manner. Their comrades bid them fond farewell. Their hearts were pounding with excitement as they marched through the city filled with Germans. "Just look," whispered Kulesza, "here they were supposed to be taking us home, and yet we have an escort just like a bunch of hard-labor convicts."

At the train station there was an unruly, jostling crowd. Germans were bellowing over the din. Their companions were kind enough to form a circle around Kulesza and Julian for a few moments so that they could change into their civilian clothes. A few daring strides -- and the throng of black-marketeers, old women and other travelers was augmented by an additional person: a limping fellow covered in rags whose face did not at all agree with his attire. It was Julian Traube -- now a far cry from the old Julian, so slender, and so elegantly and impeccably dressed. His aunt later apologized to him for this costume and these shoes, one of which was a huge patent-leather pump with cracks all over it and the other was brown.

/44/ "My name is Traube, Julian Traube. You are my father's cousin."

"Uh-huh," muttered a stout little person with a pointed <beard> and glistening skin.

"I escaped from the hospital."

"Uh-huh." He held out two fingers to Julian, whom he took for a lunatic, with his two left shoes, torn trousers and rust-colored short coat.

"Have a seat," he said at last in a grating voice. "I'll bring you some tea right away. My place is very crowded." He indicated three open rooms; there was a face in each doorway listening in on the conversation. "All of my children have arrived from Mszczonów. They were all burned out of their homes. My son and son-in-law were shot," he said with a heavy sigh. "They were such good boys. And these aren't all the people living with me. I have two other sons. They went off with some grain. They're dealing on the black market." He gave Julian a conspiratorial wink.

Exhausted from the journey and from his experiences, Julian could barely sit upright in his chair. Yet the warm reception he had received did not encourage thoughts of lingering.

"Do you have any papers?"

"No."

"What do you mean, no? We have searches here all the time. They check documents and kill people."

"What time is it?" Julian interrupted in a proud and commanding voice. The large watch dangling on the other man's fat belly indicated five o'clock.

"I have to get to Skierniewice. Could you point me in the right direction?"

"Certainly, by all means," screeched the "relative" with thinly concealed joy.

"You follow the railroad tracks as far as the woods. Go straight through the woods and you'll come to Kampinos Forest. Oy," he squealed joyfully, "you're in luck. There's a Jew in the Forest, a baker. When you get there, say you're related to Indych from Żyrardów. That'll do the trick. You can spend the night there, and then it's only another fifteen kilometers."

Julian stood up. "Thank you, in my father's name." He was more amused than angry with this relative who only now came up with millions of reasons why he should stay.

"Why don't you spend the night here. We'll squeeze you in somehow. After all, curfew will be starting soon. You shouldn't be out."

He left. He was greeted by a cold, bracing wind. Down by the rail tracks he ran into two old women, and joined them in complaining about hard times and the Krauts. After a few minutes they were on such good terms that the women were reluctant to let him go. They kindheartedly explained to him which way to go to avoid getting lost. Julian had to hurry if he wanted to make it to Kampinos Forest before the start

of curfew. He walked briskly along a narrow path that wound along the edge of the trees. In the middle of the woods he crossed a wide, rain-softened road.

/45/ He gritted his teeth to suppress the pain he felt with every step he took. It was already quite dark when he came to a village, where he inquired of a chubby-cheeked little peasant girl the way to the baker's.

"It's right there." She pointed at a little cottage two steps away. Timidly he pressed on the creaking door-latch. He was enveloped by warmth, the aroma of some kind of soup, the musty smell of bed sheets in need of an airing, and that indefinable something that peasant cottages all have about them. In the gloom illuminated by a small oil lamp stood three wooden beds and a little table at which three small children were seated. A young <?> woman with a haggard face and powerful red hands was combing out a two-year-old girl's wet blonde hair.

"Good evening," said Julian, standing in the narrow passage between the beds.

"Good evening." She stopped combing, wiped her hands on her apron, and gazed at Julian's bizarre figure, his handsome face, his glowing yet sad eyes, and his beggar's garb.

"Do you know Indych in Żyrardów?"

Without making a reply she rushed to the door, squeezing past Julian with some difficulty. She hooked the door shut, set the chain and threw the bolt.

"No, no, I don't know him."

"Indych from Żyrardów told me to mention his name. I'm very sorry, but I have to get to Skierniewice and it's curfew now. Could I possibly stay the night someplace around here?" As he took in his surroundings Julian became more and more abashed.

"Why, of course. Have a seat. You can stay with us. I don't know Mr. Indych, maybe my husband does. Sit down."

He sat on the edge of a little chair and watched the hefty woman's every movement. She spread a fresh tablecloth on the table, sent little Abramek to the store for some butter and boiled some milk. Then she invited Julian to share in their humble supper. Julian was moved by this reception to give a brief account of what he had been through the past few weeks.

"Oh, sir," she said, sobbing into her apron. "I know all about such things. We've just returned from wandering around homeless ourselves. The things I've seen the past few weeks. Hard times are coming. We have a bakery; we're the only Jews in Kampinos Forest. We have to bake secretly at night. The Germans rob us." The three children assembled around the tiny table could not tear their dark little goggling eyes from Julian's face. They listened to the same things they themselves had seen and lived through, and they seemed surprised that it all sounded so different the way grown-ups told it -- somehow more terrifying and sad.

The baker arrived, his clothes soaking wet and /46/ his face covered with flour. Glancing at Julian he extended his

hand and mumbled his last name. Julian felt he should mention Indych. The baker vaguely recalled buying some grain from him once, but assured Julian that it was of no importance. "We have to help one another out," he said by way of conclusion. "You'll rest up with us for a couple of days, and then I'll see about arranging a cart to take you to Skierniewice." Julian, drowsy and worn out as he was, was touched by the kindness shown him by these strangers, and put up only a feeble show of resistance. They got ready for bed. Julian wanted to spend the night in the chair, but they would not hear of this. The baker's wife, with a gesture that brooked no opposition, indicated to him her own bed, which she covered with fresh sheets. For the first time in weeks Julian fell into a deep, reinvigorating sleep.

He was awakened by warm sunshine and the smell of strong coffee. He wanted to set out immediately, but met with lively resistance on the part of the baker's wife. After much discussion, they advised Julian to ride with their neighbor when he took his cart to Skierniewice on Friday. Even after Julian was already seated in the cart, the baker's wife tried to talk him into staying longer. He gazed for a long moment into her kindly eyes and thanked her from the bottom of his heart for her concern.

For Julian the days that followed were sad one, woven in a pattern of despair: his suddenly widowed aunt, random shots echoing in the streets, the fear induced by the constant house-searches, and the anxious waiting for news of

his family. He tried to get in touch with them in various ways. There were times when he wanted to go to the Germans and confess that he was a prisoner-of-war -- to put an end to the constant dread of discovery once and for all. But the instinct [for self-preservation] was stronger than his frayed nerves. The wound refused to heal, and caused him searing pain that kept him awake nights. He would lie awake all night thinking, unable to sleep. In the morning he would get up and, shuffling his slippers quietly so as not to wake up his aunt, he would hobble about the bomb-wrecked apartment. Then there would be long conversations about her tragically murdered husband. Julian would try to divert her mind by bringing up his own loneliness and the lack of news from his family. Mrs. Wolkowicz would quickly forget about her own troubles, out of tender love for her sister Aniela, Julian's mother.

One such forlorn day, when apathy had left Julian with a feeling of emptiness, /47/ when he felt like something used up and unnecessary, something tossed into this little apartment from which there was no exit -- from which the only view looked out of a ground-floor window onto a muddy courtyard and a gate -- he stood for hours and gazed with unseeing eyes as some children played by the gate. Only rarely did anyone come through it. His thoughts wandered far and wide: why, not long ago, he was somebody; so many people seemed to need him... He saw himself sitting in the cafe before they left for the front. He was sitting with Marysia

L. Strictly speaking, they had nothing to say to each other. He stared out a window crawling with plump flies; they buzzed quietly as they beat themselves against the glass. Whether it was a dream or a hallucination or reality, from the shadows of the gateway emerged a familiar silhouette. Those same lovely, if slightly thickset legs, that same rocking motion in the hips, that same thoroughbred little head that seemed almost weighed down in back by the light-blond hair. Julian flattened his nose against the windowpane. There she was -- Marysia, alive and real, smiling through the glass.

"Maryś!"

"Jul! How are you? My God, you look terrible." She flung herself wearily onto the sofa and offered him a cigarette. Julian gazed at this radiant emissary from the world of long ago.

"Tell me something, how are my parents?"

She inhaled deeply on the cigarette with her eyes half-closed. "They're all alive and well, and worried about you."

"Maryś, don't lie. I don't believe you. Tell me how you got here."

"I got a ride in a German car. I came straight from Żyrardów. They told me there that you had been sent to a labor-camp in Germany. That Miss Zosia -- you know who I mean, don't pretend that you don't, the one who took such good care of you -- was sharp with me. She wanted to know if I was your wife or your fiancée."

"Maryś, stop kidding around."

"All right, I'll be good. Well, when Zosia saw that I was genuinely concerned, she told me in confidence that you planned to escape. But she wasn't sure whether you succeeded or not. I knew you had an aunt in Skierniewice, so I followed my intuition, took a chance and, well, here I am."

Mrs Wolkowicz came in in the middle of her story.

"Miss L. My aunt."

"You see, Julek, and you were worried that everyone had forgotten about you. Don't mind me, miss. Why don't you stretch out? You must be tired from the journey back. I'll go and make something to eat."

/48/ "What do you hear from my sister?"

"They're all alive and well, though it's a miracle after all their roaming around. Jul, you're still sad. Aren't you the least bit happy that I came?"

"I'm glad, Marysia. It's just that I don't believe you when you tell me that everyone is alive. I've had such horrible forebodings. I'm afraid that you're hiding the ghastly truth from me."

"But I give you my word," she said springing up from the sofa. "They're all alive. Your brother-in-law is in Warsaw; he went there to fetch Różka. He had heard from her that she was alive, but that she had had some horrible experience. By way of proof I've brought you your ring, the one you left with your father before you went away. He gave it to me with the request that I deliver it to you personally. He also said, 'Please tell my son that it was the only thing I made

sure not to lose when we were on the road.' Your mother told me to kiss you many times for her, and I'll be happy to comply if you'll be nice and show me that you're glad to see me. But let's wait until your aunt leaves us alone together, all right?" she whispered, and gave him such a piercing look with her magnificent blue eyes that Julian became aroused.

"Lord, look at the clothes you're wearing. Whatever became of the flashy dresser I used to know? I've brought you some clothes. I don't know whether they'll be to your liking. You folks bought them last week. There are some shoes and shirts, too. I'll have you all spruced up in no time."

"Where on earth did you get hold of shoes?"

The bleak little apartment rang out with her carefree laughter. All of a sudden she turned serious, jumped to her feet and flung back her braids with a gesture he knew all too well. Heedless of his aunt's presence, she threw her arms around Julian's neck.

"Julian, how is your wound?" she whispered, a note of anxiety in her voice. "Show me where it is. They told me in the hospital that you weren't fully recovered when you left.

"Why, that's ridiculous," Julian fended off the question as he grasped her lovely arms. "I'm fine. A few more sets of bandages would come in handy, but unfortunately I can't go out in the street. They're checking everybody's documents, and I don't have any. I'm not registered. Meanwhile we're

afraid to bring a doctor to the apartment, because my aunt doesn't know a single one of the doctors left in town."

"Show me how it looks," she begged him. "No, wait." She opened the suitcase. "You can change at the same time."

The two women examined Julian's wound and came to a very unsettling conclusion. They jointly declared that the wound looked hideous. /49/ Pus was oozing from it, and it had a nasty greenish cast to it.

"I'll have to ask my German friend to take <us> to Łódź tomorrow. I originally told him to pick me up in three days." Seeing the look of astonishment on Julian's face, she explained with some embarrassment: "I have Aryan papers stating that I am *Reichsdeutsch*. They were certified by the Gestapo in Poznań. I got them by accident. They give me the right to use military transportation. It's no big deal," she said by way of self-justification, in response to Julian's dissatisfied look. "I had to get to you somehow. Nobody can get out of Poznań without a pass except for Germans. You folks are supposed to be getting these passes for themselves and Basia. My parents have been in Łódź already for a couple of days now. Hela's there with them. As for your brother-in-law and Zocha, they're likewise trying to get out. They'll probably all travel together. It's terrible what's going on in Poznań."

"Please," Julian interrupted. "Tell me everything in order starting from the beginning of the war."

"Julian, let the young lady get some rest," his aunt interjected. "You'll have plenty of time [to talk]. Miss, you'd probably like to wash and freshen up after your trip."

Julian was his usual impatient and demanding self. "I wish I already had it over and done with -- he'll give me no peace until I've told him everything," Marysia muttered as she followed Mrs. Wolkowicz into the kitchen.

During their absence Julian changed his clothes. When they came back a moment later, the two women exclaimed together: "Oh, aren't you fine! What a handsome fellow!" Lunch was a cheery affair. Julian felt imbued with new vitality; he perked up and his eyes took on a new luster. Marysia concluded that Julian's recent experiences had not altered him for the worse. They sat down on the sofa in the corner of the room. Reddish sunlight played on the walls. His aunt was sewing something at the little table by the window. Marysia had already managed to deliver a few of the kisses that his mother had sent to him. Now, in response to his importunities, she gathered her strength to tell him the whole story of her experiences in chronological order.

"A few days after you marched off, almost the entire civilian population of Poznań cleared out of town. Of the Jews, every last one left. The only ones who stayed behind were the pensioners in the retirement home, and your grandmother, who remained in her apartment by herself. The caretaker's daughter was there to keep an eye on her."

"What became of her?"

"She's fine. The Germans paid her a couple of visits, /50/ and she gave them what for. She all but whacked them with her cane. Your parents left Poznań on the train together with mine. Your sister Basia left her future husband behind -- his father insisted on staying in the city. He made the right choice, since he didn't have to go through all that useless careening around. The train had gotten a few dozen kilometers when it was bombed. There were a lot of casualties. Everyone got separated. It was only on the way back that they managed to find one another again. I was one of the first to make it back to Poznań. I reported to my old firm. The Germans were already in charge of things there. I pretended to be German. Thanks to this courteous gray-haired German major and my Aryan looks I succeeded in getting papers attesting that I was a member of the German nation. You have this to thank for the pleasure of seeing me now. What else would you like to know?"

"What's going on in Poznań right now? Why did everybody move to Łódź?"

"Poznań is finished. Even though the Jews are being well-treated in comparison with what they're doing to the Poles, still, they've taken all the stores and businesses away from everyone. Your stores were legally sold by the Germans for a couple thousand each. They were bought by Germans. For each store your father received a bank passbook giving him the right to withdraw a hundred zlotys a week from each account. He drew the first installment, but when he

showed up to get the next one they took the passbooks away from him, and that was the end of that. Everywhere you go, Poles are being beaten, killed, robbed or executed on the slightest pretext. Rumor has it they're going to be expelled from the city altogether. The Jews are likewise afraid of being deported, and since right now Warsaw is closed and there's no food there [anyway], they are moving to Łódź. Lola and Grisza are there, too. The first news we had of you came from them. My folks departed the day I left. Stasiek and Zosia are waiting for a van to haul the furniture. You've seen their furniture -- they have some very nice things.

"Your brother-in-law left to go get Róża in Warsaw. He seems to have gotten false papers, too, because he went by car. Weren't you the one who suggested that she go to Warsaw because it would be less dangerous?" she asked Julian.

He nodded with a sigh.

/51/ "Well," Marysia went on, "she lived through hell. She was staying with some relative of Karol's on Mariańska Street. The whole street burned. Róża had to jump from the second floor. She was eight months pregnant, as you know. By some miracle she wasn't the least bit hurt. Whew, I'm beat," she said, stretching out comfortably on the sofa. "That's about all I know. Now tell me about yourself."

She placed her pretty hand with its slender fingers on top of Julian's. The room became still. By the window his aunt sat and went on with her sewing.

<LARGE GAP IN MANUSCRIPT>

...<he> had nothing with him. He could likewise be found on Daniłowiczowska Street, where the Germans also detained currency speculators. On learning that the family of a detainee was trying to get him released, he would undertake to make the arrangements for a considerable sum. Sometimes he got the man out, sometimes not. He demanded his fee even when he had nothing to do with the case in question, or just for providing the name of someone who was about to be released from prison [anyway]. He had a few German contacts, chance acquaintances, whom he kept supplied with real coffee and tea, and other such commodities that were unobtainable on the open market.

German vehicles continued to tear up and down the streets of Warsaw and grab Jews for forced labor. The bloodhounds' job was made a lot easier when armbands became compulsory. The worst, the most dangerous work-sites were the building that formerly housed the Sejm, and the old Dynasy racetrack. Those who had the misfortune to be rounded up and sent to the Sejm were put to work burying the corpses of executed Poles. A cemetery of anonymous graves was taking over the spacious courtyards and grounds of the Sejm. The grisly nature of the work aside, the gravediggers were forced to work a breakneck pace under constant <?>, and not infrequently ended up sharing the fate of those who had been executed. The Jews who survived them had to bury their half-dead brethren. There was yet another evil aspect to the work

at the Sejm. Everybody recognized the "Sejm" cars on sight; when the Jews saw them coming they would duck into entrance ways and stores. As a result, the Sejm cars pulled in fewer and fewer laborers. Then they introduced the system of confiscating documents for a period of ten days, which was later extended to fourteen days. Woe to the hapless soul who failed -- no matter what the reason -- to show up for work on a given day. They would come to his apartment and drag him out, even if he was laid up seriously ill in bed. All men regardless of age were seized in this manner, and their documents taken away for the duration.

/52/ Only a few came out of it alive at the end of these two weeks. At best, they wound up needing surgical care for a few months. So far as the results were concerned, the work at Dynasy in no way differed from the work at the Sejm. There was, however, a difference in the routine. At the Sejm the work was purposeful and necessary; Dynasy was the domain of a sadist. There was a parking lot for German cars there. Sometimes there would be as many as dozen of them, all in need of washing and cleaning. The lot was run by *Unterscharführer SS Berkenwald*. A giant of a man, he was a butcher by trade and a sadist by inclination. Every day dozens of Jews were rounded up and placed at his disposal. In his methods Berkenwald displayed great imagination and resourcefulness. His practice of interrogating dozens of men at the same time was in itself a masterpiece of intelligence. The audience would consist of whatever SS officers happened

to be present at the time; the higher their rank, the more elaborate the show was.

"What is your name?"

The victim would give his name.

"Profession?"

If the victim named one of the learned professions, he was lashed across the eyes with a riding whip. If he made himself out to be a worker, he would get a blow to the back.

"Who wanted the war?"

Silence drew a beating; a shrug of the shoulders drew a beating; the reply "I don't know" provoked a lengthy pummeling. Finally the examiner would roar out the answer:

"The Jews wanted the war."

After this he would go berserk and begin flailing his victim in time to the words: "The Jews -- wanted -- the war! Say it! Good!" The whip whistled as he lashed the Jew in the face. "The Jews -- wanted -- the war!"

The SS officers would just laugh.

After giving everyone a thorough beating, he would give out the work-assignments. They washed the cars. It took half an hour for one person to clean up a car; three persons could accomplish the task in a few minutes. Under Berkenwald's watchful gaze four Jews would wash a German car until the metal gleamed and the windows shone. But after a couple of hours of this the Jews would be <?>. After a couple of hours of beatings, the clothing of those who had been decently dressed <hung in tatters?>. Blood oozed

through their torn garments, and their heads resembled lacerated soccer-balls after the inhuman torture they had endured. No one who saw them leaving work at the end of the day would have believed that a single German was capable of so much. The small clusters of Poles who watched them filing out reacted in various ways. One woman would turn pale and look away; another would run away as fast as she could; a third would spit with hatred. Of the men, the majority /53/ approved, declaring: "Serves them right."

There were days when *Herr Unterscharführer* needed a kilogram of real coffee or tea, or a pair of silk stockings. On such a day he would select a presentable-looking Jew and take him aside. After beating his instructions into the man with his whip, he would release him from the manual work. The Jew would fetch the coffee, tea or stockings and receive a couple of blows by way of thanks, but [at least] he managed to avoid spending several weeks in the hospital.

Before the war, the Sejm had been the arena in which the best minds had contended, just as Dynasy had been for the strongest bodies; now they had been turned into places of torture, sadistic caprices and executions -- for the good of a Europe that was to be regenerated under the auspices of the *Führer*. Jews were also rounded up and brought to other locations where, if the beatings were infrequent, the work was punishing and the tempo murderous.

The Jewish Council made desperate efforts to halt the steady rise in the daily toll of victims. After petitioning

at length and trying to intervene in other ways, the councilmen succeeded in getting permission to create a sanctioned work enterprise. On <DATE?> a bureau known as the Labor Battalion came into being under the supervision of the Warsaw Jewish Council. This new institution was headed by Councilman Zrudelewicz; the attorney Goldfail was named as director. The Council hired a whole new staff for the main office and its district branches, and committed itself to supplying six thousand Jews daily for physical labor. On instructions from the German authorities, the Council approved an ordinance stating that every Jew not in the employ of the Communal administration was obligated to work for three days out of each month at a location to be assigned to him. The next day the Labor Battalion issued directives spelling out work-schedules and the places to which individuals were to report for work. The crews were to assemble at 6 AM, and were to be conducted to their work-assignments by section- and group-leaders (the so-called district officials). The roundups tapered off, but did not cease entirely. Herr Berkenwald continued to catch his quota. Why? -- because the ones who were ordered to report to Dynasy were destitute Jews, who, having no support in the community could not appeal to the Council directly, nor could they count on the help of some influential aunt. Berkenwald turned up his nose at these poor, emaciated Jews, who were already beaten down by fate.

/54/ However, setting aside Dynasy and a few other minor work-sites that submitted emergency requests, the roundups subsided and the city breathed a sigh of relief. . While a Jew out on the streets still felt like a meek little creature lost in a jungle, the jungle had declared a cease-fire. Everything would have been all right if the Labor Battalion had been under German control. But the Battalion was run by Jews. This or that Jew would, as an experiment, skip work on his designated day, just to see what the Community would do to him. The result was that they would send someone else in his place; the Community kept several hundred such substitutes on reserve and paid them each four zlotys per day worked. Those who did not show up for work at the appointed time were slapped with a fine. Things would still have gone all right if not for the fact that the number of absentees mushroomed daily. The Jewish Council was forced to adopt a [new] system with the acquiescence of the Germans. Namely, they hired a couple of thousand indigent Jews willing to work for four zlotys a day. For each day worked they received a coupon that could be redeemed once a month. On account of this they acquired the nickname "coupon-workers," while those who received orders to work from the Labor Battalion came to be known as "requisition-workers." The requisition-workers who did not want to work had to pay 33 zlotys a month. The Jews of Warsaw were now satisfied -- "You can buy yourself out" -- and that was not such a bad arrangement. Everyone was content with the revised procedure: the requisition-

workers, because they could buy themselves out of working; the Community, because it collected ten zlotys a day per worker but paid out four; and the coupon-workers, because they could always count on their four zlotys a day. Quite by accident, there was someone else who profited as well. The well-known funeral establishment of Pinkiert & Co., whose services were employed by the Community, willingly bought up the four-zloty coupons, paying three zlotys on the spot. The poor could not afford to wait until the end of the month to get paid for their beatings and their toil. For the first time in its history the firm of Pinkiert & Co. paid its own customers.

The overseer for Jewish affairs, *Untersturmführer SS* Brandt, was well aware that the Council's assets were frozen and that it could not pay its workers on time. However, [others stepped in] to intervene in ways that put the officials of the Jewish Community in an awkward position. Various German-run organizations would receive their quotas of Jewish workers and, after acquainting them with the details of their duties -- by means of an appropriate dose of beatings -- would realize that Jews in fact did very good work. Relations improved day by day. The shrewder Germans /55/ established contacts with the work supervisors [at the Labor Battalion], and the day came when they discovered that these poor Jews made four zlotys a day, which was barely enough to buy a kilo of black bread. They [also] found out that the Jews did not receive these four zlotys right away,

but often had to wait up to six weeks. This made a German's blood boil -- how dare anyone but him mistreat a Jew? This was when the Germans began their "interventions," which went like this: a German vehicle, typically a truck, would pull up and out would jump a German and his witness, a Jewish coupon-worker carrying a stack of coupons (his own and others collected from his co-workers). Revolver in hand, the German would lead the way, with the poor Jew tagging along behind. Panic would reign among the officials of the Labor Battalion for a few minutes, until the poor worker received what was owed him. The German would leave, followed by the satisfied coupon-worker. Now that he had "his" German, he was untouchable. To have one's own German meant not having to be afraid of anyone.

There were several such "interventions" each day. Things went on like this for some time, until the higher authorities, in response to a petition from the Council, informed all places of work that this type of activity hindered the Jewish Council in carrying out its responsibilities. Yet the "interventions" continued. They only came to an end when staff-workers from the Labor Battalion established their contacts with the Germans. Such a staff-worker became a VIP, a big shot; a lowly clerk would be transformed into a force to reckon with. Such was Izydor Hazenszprung, who before the war had earned 240 zlotys a month as a full-time employee of the Jewish Community. During one of the inspection-tours, he got to know a German

officer, who took a liking to Hazenszprung. From then on all matters having to do with the Labor Battalion were handled by Hazenszprung. The councilmen had no say in the matter, nor did the director of the Battalion. Hazenszprung deliberated, Hazenszprung decided, Hazenszprung took measures. He became the de facto director, the lord and master of the Labor Battalion. Hazenszprung had his German. The pathetic little scribe, whose heart used to go into palpitations whenever he entered the office of the President of the Jewish Community (he had seen a succession of them in the course of his long bureaucratic career), was now making real money and feathering his nest. How he made was a secret known only to himself. Everything was hunky-dory.¹ Naturally, Izydor Hazenszprung's star faded the very same day "his" German was transferred away from Warsaw. Hazenszprung shrank until he seemed smaller than he actually was, turned gray and lost both his appetite and the bloom from his cheeks. He retained only the aura of fame of someone who had made a fortune.

Next came Maurycy Hendel. He had been working at the Labor Battalion for barely two months. /56/ Before the war he was a jack-of-all-trades; he kept a house of ill repute in Łódź. He spent two years in prison for white-slavery.

Maurycy Hendel had the good fortune to know an extremely influential German, with whom he curried favor. He made

¹ The Polish original reads: *Szafa grała*, which literally means, "the [music-] cabinet, or jukebox, was playing." The colloquial expression *Szafa gra*, "the jukebox is playing," is still current, and means that everything is going very well, is "copacetic." The author appends a parenthetical remark stating: "The expression '*Szafa gra*' originated in the Jewish Community and came into general use."

himself a career full of adventures and fraught with consequences for the entire Jewish population of Warsaw. In his defense it can be said that after making himself colossally rich by exploiting the misfortunes of his fellow Jews, he later matched the evil he had done with an equal amount of good. His first achievement was getting the authorities to approve the creation of a Jewish police force, with responsibility for maintaining order within the Community. A police force was badly needed. The two Polish policemen assigned to duty in the Community were clearly not enough to maintain public order. The most they could do was keep things under control immediately in front of the building on Grzybowska Street. On the other hand, several dozen Jewish militiamen armed with rubber truncheons were the perfect solution to the problem of maintaining order both within and around the building. But who knows whether this first Jewish security force was not what set a whole train of tragic events in motion? The Jewish Community in Łódź, headed by Abraham Rumkowski, had long had its own Jewish Security Force. In Łódź there was a ghetto into which the Germans had herded all the Jews from the surrounding towns. Working for the Germans, the Jews manufactured shoes and furs, and labored in the textile industry. There was no unemployment; everyone worked except for minors and the elderly, but in later years the Germans found a way to get around even this problem. The Łódź ghetto had its own Jewish administration, its own Jewish security force, Jewish courts

with Jewish verdicts signed by Abraham Rumkowski (the so-called "Abramki"), and yellow patches. But -- and the Jews in the General-Government found consolation in this -- Łódź was part of the Reich. To be sure, there were rumors of discriminatory regulations in the works, rumors that the Germans were going to do the same thing in Warsaw -- even set up a ghetto -- but those who spread these tales were regarded as lunatics and individuals with overactive imaginations. (Though both Poles and even our own people referred to the Jews as omniscient.) These things could happen in Łódź, the optimists said, because there were only Germans and Jews left there; besides, Łódź was part of the Reich, while this was Poland even in the minds of the Germans.

"Poland in the minds of the Germans" was supposed to mean that the Polish population would never stand for the creation of a ghetto. /57/ The first sounding of Polish sentiments and attitudes about the Jewish question in Warsaw was not, as one might have expected, to be in the newspapers, but in the streets. It was the street that would give the answer, not isolated individuals, and the street would express its views with a deafening roar.

The Department of Jewish Affairs of the Warsaw Gestapo, at 25 Szucha Avenue, came up with a bright idea. It all started the afternoon of August 15th. Swarms of little Polish boys -- they were between eight and ten years old -- poured into the streets inhabited predominantly by Jews. Brandishing sticks, canes and old umbrellas in their little

hands, they began attacking Jews. The pint-sized assailants offered such a bizarre spectacle that passers-by were unsure how to react to their provocations. A Jew who was set upon by the little squirts would take a few harmless blows, shrug it off and be on his way. Those with less patience would wave their canes or their arms at the boys without hurting them. But woe to the man who in defending himself actually knocked a child down or hit him hard... From out of nowhere a band of adult thugs would appear, who had been waiting for just such an opportunity. These avengers would come to the boy's defense, and beat their victim mercilessly.

The same thing was repeated the next day at exactly 4 PM. Bands of insolent juveniles, egged on by the laughter of Polish bystanders, inflicted beatings on the Jews. The scenes were inexpressibly tragicomic: grown men fled in panic before boys who only came up to their knees. The young boys forced Jews to jump out of moving streetcars; they broke the windows of Jewish stores so that they had to close; they snatched parcels and handbags from men and women, and made them hand over their caps and hats. Meanwhile, adult Poles stood by laughing till their sides hurt, or jumped in suddenly to back up the demands of the youths. With each passing day the number of children involved in beating adults grew, and the youths became more brazen. Children were carrying out a pogrom; children were beating adults. Each day at the same time a small group of children would get things started, then more would join their ranks, and soon

there would be hundreds involved in these pranks. They played cowboys and Indians, cops and robbers. Streets and streetcars became empty; the stores whose windows had been broken by the boys were boarded up. Glass fell with a crash from second-floor windows, as the urchins hit them with well-aimed shots.

Who organized them? the Jews wondered. Who was behind them? Why did the Germans tolerate such goings-on, which sowed panic and caused irreparable damage in the Jewish district? How could they permit such anarchy? No one had an answer to these questions. /58/ It remained, however, the general conviction that the Germans could put a stop to all the shenanigans immediately if they wanted to. The councilmen protested to the authorities, who merely smiled. "Who is beating Jews? Children...Grown men are getting beaten up by children. For shame, Messrs Councilmen." The councilmen would leave feeling ashamed, and the horde of little brigands went on rioting in the streets of Warsaw with impunity. Jews who had Aryan features tore off their armbands, only to fall prey during the late afternoon to blackmailers who hovered about spying and pointing out the "lawbreakers" to the police or the gendarmes. Each day hundreds of men and women returned home without hats, handbags or briefcases. At the end of three weeks the children ceased their games. Quiet reigned in the streets. The hour of four o'clock was no longer threatening, at least not in the strict sense of the word. Rather, there was

something tragic in the enforced passivity of an adult who has been "beaten into submission" by a child.

On <?>, 1940, an ordinance was promulgated forbidding Jews to possess in excess of 2000 zlotys in cash. The decree was impersonal in tone and, to put it simply, incomprehensible. Did the limit apply to an entire family of Jews, or was each individual permitted to have 2000 zlotys? The consequences were not long in making themselves felt. Patrols of gendarmes stopped pedestrians and searched them as they were about to enter the grocery stores. They confiscated everything over 2000 zlotys, and sometimes took even more. Individual soldiers did the same thing. If they found no money, they did not hesitate to take watches, wedding rings and pieces of jewelry. Hard currency skyrocketed in value; the black-market value of the dollar was 200 zlotys.

On <?>, 1940, the Jewish Council, on instructions from the authorities, published an ordinance requiring all males between the ages of fourteen and sixty to register. There was a form they had to fill out, stating their occupation. Special emphasis was laid on the part of the form having to do with the registrant's occupation. He was required to describe his professional qualifications and specialization in detail, and to give his occupation both before the war and since 1939, if it had changed. The Jews who had worked in the professions were the most anxious, on the assumption that they were totally expendable. Skilled workers were also

worried, since they had every reason to believe that, as soon as the registration was completed, they would be the first to be shipped off to any future labor-camps.

The registration slips /59/ came in several colors: green for professionals, orange for skilled workers, yellow for office-workers. The Jewish Council was unable to explain what the real purpose of the registration was. This gave rise to a great deal of speculation and conjecture. People let their imaginations run away with them, and rumors spread fear. The Jews of Warsaw braced themselves for the worst kinds of discrimination. The optimists, while they agreed that a Jew in German hands was as good as lost, nevertheless maintained that things could be worse: at least those who had money would survive.

All large-scale production had long since ceased. Only small plants were still in operation, secretly and mostly at night. Commerce was limited to small grocery shops, which multiplied daily. Currency-dealing flourished. The black market was located on Pawia Street, that is, on a street full of Jews dressed mostly in gaberdines.² Rates were agreed on in the entrance-ways, and the transactions themselves -- often involving huge sums of money -- would take place in the hallways and courtyards. Jews bought from Jews. The hard currency made its way next to a Jewish cafe; from there it went to a Polish establishment -- the Poles were buying a lot of currency. The lion's share ended up in the hands of

² A play on words is intended here: "Pawia" means "Peacock."

peasants, who hid it in strongboxes in their barns or their other outbuildings to wait for better times. The peasants also bought up sofas, silver, porcelain and pianos. A kilogram of pork lard cost twenty-six zlotys.

On <?>, 1940, the German Army crossed into Belgium. On <?>, 1940, after seventeen <?> days of fighting <...>. The renowned Maginot Line, constructed with such effort over a period of twenty years, turned out to be a worthless feat of engineering. German magazines ran photographs of German soldiers distributing wine and bread to the needy inhabitants of Paris.

For the Traube family life was peaceful on the whole. Their apartment had remained untouched after the original occupants emigrated to Russia. The furniture they left behind was old and hideous, but the Traubes' apartment was one of the few in the entire building that still contained beds and tables. Karol worked for the Jewish Community in the Labor Battalion office. He worked there to protect himself from the roundups; his papers were all in order. Herman Jakubowski also worked for the Labor Battalion, as a section leader who escorted sixty Jews to their works-sites each day. Besides his salary he also received payments in kind; every day he brought home pieces of wood, some coal or a few potatoes. Julian ran around the city all day long.

/60/ He channeled his energies into currency dealings. The hard-currency market was as exciting as a poker game to him; it amused him to follow the market's ups and downs. He

also enjoyed his outings on the town, and his games of cat-and-mouse with the Germans. He dodged the gendarmes' patrols, and hid himself during the roundups, which had dwindled but not stopped. (The SS liked to hunt down their own Jewish workers and rarely made use of the services of the Labor Battalion.) He was excitable by nature and avid for impressions and experiences; these qualities found an outlet in constant observation of people and of life. He felt like a wild animal hiding in the hollow of a tree and being tracked by hunters. At the same time he had enjoyed an unbroken run of good luck: he was never once caught despite spending the whole day away from home without papers. On top of that he was making pretty decent money.

The only member of the family who had no income was its former provider, Jakub Traube. His business had come to a complete standstill. Most of the goods had been seized by the Germans, and the rest had been hidden away by the Jews. Textile goods were no longer to be had, since the Germans had taken over the plants and converted them to military production. The only ones who could keep their heads above water were the young, many of whom were shady operators. The older, respectable merchants had lost their *raison d'être*. They were incapable of adapting to the new situation, to the constantly fluctuating prices; they could not get used to the lack of punctuality, the failure to honor a contractual agreement, or other similar things that were the result of the ever-changing conditions of life. The respectable pre-

war merchants and industrialists had come down in the world, and they were demoralized. In the Jewish district one could find well-dressed merchants and factory-owners from before the war who were reduced to begging passers-by for assistance. Jakub Traube encountered more than one of his old suppliers, who would look at him with lusterless eyes and whisper in his ear: "Mr. Traube, I'm hungry." After such an encounter Traube would return home depressed. He would sit there feeling glum and unable to regain his composure. He was plagued by the fear that the same thing might happen to him if the war lasted much longer. The enforced idleness fretted him; he felt that he was still young and full of energy. Yet he had to sit and watch as his wife sold off their undergarments, their clothes and their more valuable possessions. Jakub Traube was not about to let his children support him. "As long as I have any money left, I will pay my own way," he would say proudly. By now he had given up all attempts to earn a living. Instead he became keenly interested in politics, and placed his hopes for salvation in a swift end to the war. And while he publicly predicted that the war would end in 1943, he secretly cherished the belief that the miracle would occur sooner than that.

/61/ On <?>, 1940, Russia began the war with Finland, and little Finland was beating Russia -- the colossus with feet of clay, as they say.

Life was becoming more unbearable for the Jews of Warsaw with each passing day. The roundups were increasing again;

the Labor Battalion could not keep up with the German need for manpower. The number of volunteer workers had leveled off, while the demand for unpaid laborers grew daily. Having to work at Dynasy or the Sejm was still the most-feared assignment. The curfew was a blessing to the Jews; at the stroke of eight, the gates closed and the Jews came out into their courtyards to discuss the day's events. They felt secure. Things remained like this until January 15, 1940, when a new round of searches and arrests began among doctors, lawyers and engineers. Hundreds of Jewish professionals were sent to prison or to concentration camps, never to return. Members of the intelligentsia went into hiding, sleeping away from their apartments. Doctors who maintained a practice had the hardest time hiding: the threat of arrest during consultation hours hung over their heads. Not everyone was arrested, however; the Germans were looking for people they deemed politically unreliable, although some innocent victims were also seized. To all of these plagues must be added *Oberscharführer SS Dern* and his automobile. Dern grabbed Jews to work on the farmstead at Falenty, which was under his personal supervision. He would keep them there for six weeks, then release them and draft a new batch of laborers. Dern had his own way of doing things at the camp. [In most respects,] he differed little from other German sadists, but his system of punishments was uniquely his own. He forced the Jews to flog one another, and watched carefully to ensure that they showed no mercy; a forbearing executioner risked

being flogged himself by another Jew. When the death penalty was called for, Dern took pains to spare his victim any unnecessary suffering; he would shoot him in the back of the head at very close range. Aside from this, he took exceptionally good care of his men. He would drive a truck into Warsaw early on Saturday mornings with a couple of his hands, stop at a large bakery and confiscate several hundred *czulenty*<?> for his men. He also requisitioned clothing and shoes for his prisoners in the same manner: stopping better-dressed individuals on the street, he would relieve them of their coats and shoes and let them go. The Jews that came back from Falenty told stories that only magnified the aura of dread that surrounded Dern's green car.

Belgium and France fell. /62/ The *Führer's* victory speeches were full of bombast and laced with anti-Jewish venom. "If the war goes on much longer, we are doomed," the Jews said. The impoverished Jewish population was hitting bottom. In Warsaw a typhus epidemic broke out. The shallow graves dug for bombing victims in the parks and squares, the decomposing bodies in rubble-filled cellars, and the rising level of poverty were bound to produce an epidemic. The first to fall victim to it were the poor and malnourished. All the hospitals in Warsaw filled up during the very first month [of the epidemic]. Jews were admitted only to the Jewish hospital in the Czyste district, which could accommodate only a fraction of the number who were ill. The situation was resolved by isolating the sick in their cramped

apartments. The apartment of a typhus victim was marked with a red label: "Premises infected with typhus. Entry prohibited." The result of such isolation was, in most cases, that all of the tenants in the building came down with the disease. The number of cases grew with each day. Even the opening of a quarantine facility in the large and modern public-school building on Leszno Avenue was to no avail. Those who had been in contact with a typhus victim were sent to the quarantine for a period of two weeks. A stay at the quarantine was an ordeal in itself, combining hunger, filth and overcrowding. The wealthier inmates paid 500 zlotys for a bed, which provided a bonanza to the staff. During the first month of the epidemic, the Jewish Cemetery on Okopowa Boulevard recorded two thousand deaths. In the predominantly Jewish section of Warsaw, banners were stretched across the streets. They read: "*Seuchensperrgebiet* -- Typhus Zone: Entry Forbidden." The entrances to dozens of streets were festooned with these banners. The epidemic raged all over Warsaw. The number of cases among the Aryan residents was proportionately the same as among Jews, but the mortality rate for Poles was lower, because they had access to more hospitals and cheaper medical care. What [then] was the meaning of these banners? What, besides propaganda, was the purpose of the anti-Semitic posters that depicted a Jew with a louse over the caption: "The Jew -- Typhus-Bearer"?

/63/ The answer was to come during the next few months, when things began to happen with lightning speed. The Jews

of Warsaw were confronted with a new threat: plans for setting up a ghetto. Although the Jews had been expecting discrimination of the most extreme sort, the news that a ghetto was to be created hit them like a bolt from the blue. In the encyclopedia, the entry for "ghetto" reads: "A section of a city where members of any racial group are segregated." In the twentieth century the name was changed; for the word "ghetto" the Nazis substituted "Jewish Quarter."

The *Nowy kurier warszawski* expatiated at length on the reasons compelling the authorities to create the "Jewish Quarter." Segregating Jews from Aryans was supposed to be in the interest of good mutual relations. The Jewish Council received a whole array of instructions in connection with the impending changes. The Jewish Quarter was to be self-governing and subject exclusively to the German authorities. In the heart of Warsaw a Jewish state was emerge in total isolation from the Aryan populace. One of the Jewish Council's most important tasks was the creation of its own disciplinary force to maintain order in the ghetto. This was not to be a Jewish police force. To supervise the creation of this unit, a professional with first-class qualifications was appointed: Józef Chudny <?> Szeryński, a former colonel dismissed from the Polish Police and a converted Jew. The Germans imposed Maurycy Hendel on him as his right-hand man, with the rank of inspector. The Public Order Service (SP), as it was called, was answerable not only to the German authorities, but to the Polish police and the Jewish Council.

Its full title was the "Public Order Service of the Jewish Council of Warsaw." Recruitment for the service, though it was not widely advertised, created a stir among the Jews. There were a number of reasons for this. The Warsaw Community knew what had happened in the Łódź ghetto, where the Jewish militia was composed of the dregs of society. As a result, the population was spied on and subjected to blackmail by their fellow Jews under the color of authority. To prevent the same situation from arising in Warsaw, the Jewish Council decided to hire only members of the intelligentsia. Applicants were required to have served in the army and to possess at least a high-school education; they were also to furnish character references signed by two [deputy?] councilmen or one councilmen.

/64/ Aside from performing their civic duty as members of an unpaid service, the Jewish intelligentsia had a very compelling reason for signing up. The recruiting drive coincided with a German decree ordering all Jews who had served as officers in the Polish Army to report for deportation as prisoners-of-war, whether or not they had taken part in the military campaign. Hence the Jewish officers had a choice between a German prison-camp and enlistment in the SP, whose officers were guaranteed personal immunity by the Germans. In the first week alone, the number of applications exceeded the number of available positions by a hundred to one. The security force, including administrators, was to comprise a thousand men. The Jewish

Council closed the list of applicants and proceeded to the selections. Two thousand men were summoned to appear one at a time before Colonel Szeryński, who presided at a long green table and was assisted by Inspector Hendel, the brothers Czapliński (both of them lawyers), and several members of the Jewish Council. The candidates stood at attention in front of Szeryński, who checked the information in their application-forms as they gave their names, military ranks and professions. Then they went home, where they were told to wait to be called before the medical examiners. Only those who made a favorable impression on Szeryński were called in by the examiners, who recorded the future officer's weight and height, and checked his heart; only men in perfect condition were accepted.

After ten days the selection process was nearly completed, and the Recruiting Board noted with satisfaction that the enlistees included the entire bar association, doctors, writers, artists -- in short, the intellectual elite. [At this point,] several senior officers of the SS paid a visit to the building where the Board held its deliberations. They sat down at the green table and combed through the personal files of the successful applicants. With one stroke they crossed off the names of four hundred individuals and suggested that the Board replace them with uneducated men from the working-class milieu. The councilmen tried, unsuccessfully, to explain that they had previously received different instructions; that the other German

authorities had granted permission to the Council to act as it saw fit; and that inasmuch as service with the new force was to be voluntary and unpaid, it would be difficult to find candidates among the working poor. "That's no concern of ours," [replied the SS officers.] "You can keep your six hundred intellectuals, but you have two days to come up with a complete roster." In a single instant, the house of cards that Szeryński had constructed /65/ with such zeal collapsed. Within a few hours the Board had stricken the names of the four hundred men and turned to the task of sifting the heap of applications for recruits with the sort of qualifications that they had rejected outright before.

When the force assembled in the courtyard at headquarters for the first time, the educated men were shocked: even in outward appearance there was a glaring difference between them and the other recruits. There was antagonism from the start, and it increased hourly during the whole time the service existed. One could hardly expect mutual good will between educated professionals and an assortment of petty street vendors, hawkers, errand boys and men who defied classification altogether. Hardly any blue-collar workers volunteered for duty; preoccupied with trying to eke out a living in their little shops, they could ill afford the luxury of public service.

To be able to go out into the street, to take full strides and feel the wind on your face. To talk out loud, to

laugh and even shout from time to time. To be an ordinary man and not a rat scuttling away from human beings.

At the very first roll-call, one could sense that most of the intellectuals were unhappy and ready to quit. They held back from making any decision in order to see what was going to happen. More than a thousand men stood awaiting orders in the open air in the courtyard. During the next few hours the ghetto was to be created. Through the Jewish Council, the Germans had made public the boundaries of the Jewish Quarter, with a detailed list of the streets where Jews would be permitted to live. Jews residing in other parts of the city would have to move within twenty-four hours. The streets filled up with wagons and carts loaded with furniture and shop equipment. Men, women and children carried on their backs -- or conveyed in baby-strollers -- bed sheets, clothing, pictures and laundry-wringers. Sweating and flushed from their exertions, they hurried along, getting lost and falling prey to circling thieves. The overloaded wagons, baby-strollers and other conveyances for children kept breaking down.

They fled; they rushed headlong towards a new life. In a panic they abandoned their spacious, clean and sunny apartments and counted themselves lucky /66/ if they managed to pack everything and find a room to rent right away. Room rents rose by the hour. Every hour someone could extract a profit from the misfortune that had struck the Jews, and one has to concede that those who had large apartments knew full

well how to take advantage of the situation. Rents doubled, then tripled; the demand for rooms was enormous. Landlords demanded -- and got -- 300 zlotys a month for a room, paid in advance for half a year or more. Jews were willing to pay any price to get a horse-cart, no matter what kind, and accepted any terms the lucky apartment-owners chose to impose. It is hard to live out of doors in a city, especially with small children.

The creation of the ghetto took many by surprise. In spite of the direst predictions, deep down they clung to a typically Jewish optimism. They had dreaded the possibility that the Germans might set up a ghetto in Warsaw; they had made predictions and placed bets with those who disagreed, but in their heart of hearts they had nurtured the virtual certainty (albeit subconsciously) that things would never go that far. You could expect just about anything from Germans, but even they would not dare to engage in such a blatant form of discrimination. What would America say? What would the whole civilized world say? They might want to intimidate us, but they <will actually get around to doing it.> The creation of the ghetto, which they had been anticipating for a few months, took everyone equally by surprise.

The exchange of apartments: once again the building on Grzybowska Street became the setting for the heart-rending appeals of those Jews who had no place to go and no money with which to satisfy the cupidity of their brother Jews. The Community was helpless, having at its disposal only a

dozen or so apartments located on property belonging to pre-war schools. They could accommodate only a minuscule percentage of the homeless. That night several hundred Jewish families slept in entrance-ways. Their hearts contracting with hatred, they gazed up at the dark and tightly closed windows behind which their well-scrubbed brethren lay sleeping. And yet there were many in Warsaw who took in the poor, giving them rooms at normal rates or even free of charge.

In the office of SP commander Szeryński, work was in full swing. The Germans had ordered them to speed things up; the officers of the SP were to be at their posts the next day. The men were given yellow armbands bearing the inscription, in black lettering: *"Judenrat im Warschau. Ordnungsdienst."* In the center of the armband, between the two lines, was a black rectangle for hash marks. The armband was to be worn on the right sleeve near the cuff; the white armband was to continue to be worn on the same side, on the forearm. After receiving their armbands, the officers filed into the office and signed a printed document that read as follows: /67/ "The undersigned agrees to serve voluntarily in the Public-Order Service. He shall regard this service as a civic duty, i.e., as unpaid work. He acknowledges that the Jewish Council accepts no responsibility for any accidents that might occur either during the performance of his duties or at any other time. His family likewise waives any and all claims, in view of the foregoing."

The next step was to divide the ghetto into districts, each with its own police-station. The scheme was modeled after the organization of the Polish Police, but with some modifications in the titles. The ghetto was subdivided into six districts. The officers fell into three categories: rank-and-file patrolmen, squad commanders and district commanders. The division was made hastily and in chaotic fashion. Those who had served as army cadets were ordered to step forward; half the men assembled in the yard did so. There was no time to verify their records; the verification was put off to a later date, but it never was actually carried out. Since every other man had served as a cadet, there was no other choice but to pick them at random. The men were lined up in a column three abreast; every fifth group of three was designated as squad leaders, and every tenth group was put in charge of an operational group. This division, made ad hoc and with the best of intentions (in the expectation that the men's records would be checked later on, which for lack of time never happened), was to have negative consequences in the future. The district commanders each were assigned three deputies as platoon leaders, and a fourth as second-in-command. The SP was outfitted with navy-blue caps like those worn by the Polish Police, numbered badges and rubber truncheons. The officers drew up their rosters and told the men to reassemble the next day at 5 AM.

On <?>, 1940, gendarmes were posted at the intersections of the following streets: Solna and Mirowska, Tłomackie and

Bielańska, Bonifraterska and Świętojerska, Nowiniarska and Świętojerska, Wałowa and Dzika, Gęsia and Okopowa, Wronia and Żelazna, Grzybowska and Żelazna, Wielka and Sienna, Leszno and Żelazna. Apartment buildings with entrances that gave on both the Aryan side and the ghetto side were divided with internal partitions. Each checkpoint was manned by two gendarmes, two Polish policemen and two patrolmen from the SP. For the first few days Aryans were allowed into and out of the ghetto for just about any reason, so long as they presented identification. The officers of the SP served as interpreters. The gendarmes were relieved every two hours, and the Polish policemen every three or four. The Jewish patrolmen worked one of two shifts each day, from 6 AM until 1 PM, or 1 PM until 8 PM. At night only gendarmes stood on duty.

/68/ The morning after the Jewish Quarter was established, it was impossible to buy [so much as] a kilogram of food. All the grocers decided to keep their stores closed. A few of their relatives were let in through back entrances to buy pharmaceutical quantities of goods for astronomical prices. The specter of starvation hovered over the ghetto during its first few hours, together with the fear typical of an animal caught in a trap. The ghetto was engulfed in a frenzy of shopping. Articles of all kinds were bought, and any price was paid. Crazy with fear of starvation, the people fell into a panic. Store-owners were dragged bodily out of their apartments and either begged or

forced to open their shops. Everyone was trying to get rid of cash and valuables in exchange for the necessities. The value of money fell by thirty percent. People bought kerosene, flour, candles, sardines -- consumable goods of every kind. There were bidding wars in the dim interiors of the shops; customers outbid each another and snatched merchandise from each other's hands. The proprietor was reduced to the role of a helpless victim ringing up the sales and looking on with pained resignation as his wares disappeared. The few Aryan stores that happened to be located within the ghetto sold off all their goods in a matter of hours. The Jews went searching for other stores, while the shopkeepers tried to hide their merchandise. By noon the price of a kilo of bread hit 20 zlotys. <People had to elbow their way across the streets of the ghetto>; the sidewalks were jammed and pedestrians walked in the middle of the pavement. The infrequent vehicles and streetcars had to plow their way slowly through the crowds. For half a million people the area allotted to them was glaringly insufficient; it seemed as if all the residents of the ghetto had poured out into the streets. Aryans loaded down with parcels bustled about the ghetto: Jews were selling off their possessions at bargain prices. A rumor circulated that the ghetto was to be sealed off in a few days, after which Aryans would be forbidden entry. A barter trade blossomed during the first hours of the ghetto's existence. People exchanged pork lard for sweaters, fancy goods and other commodities.

There was an incredible crush at all the entrances to the ghetto, guarded by German checkpoints. This worked to the advantage of some very young Jewish kids who in later months were to become celebrated smugglers. Working for poorer Jews on commission, they would flock to the checkpoints, where they would use the crowd as cover to sneak through -- often right between the legs of the gendarmes -- with their loads of bread, potatoes and various other goods. These they gave to their parents, who peddled them in turn on the streets or under archways.

Among the privileged were the officers of the SP, /69/ who were permitted by the gendarmes to cross over to the Aryan side to make purchases for their own personal use. Those who worked for German firms [outside the ghetto] had the same privilege; they were allowed to bring back five kilos of food (that is, vegetables and bread) apiece each day. From the start they attempted to bring in dozens of kilos, but the gendarmes searched everyone, beat the violators and confiscated their goods. There were some who got lucky, if the gendarmes were in a good mood or there was a particularly dense crowd of Aryans passing in or out whose documents had to be checked. The gendarmes disposed of the confiscated goods, chiefly bread and potatoes, in various ways. Part of the bread they gave to ragged Aryans, who sang the praises of the gendarmes for their "kindheartedness"; part went to the Polish policemen stationed at the

checkpoints; and a third part went to the patrolmen of the SP.

Julian Traube was standing on duty near the checkpoint at the intersection of Świętojerska and Bonifraterska streets. Dressed in high boots, fur coat and military belt, with two armbands on his right sleeve, a nickel-plated badge on his left breast and a cyclist's cap on his head, he looked like a civil guard from the days before or immediately after the revolution. He stood at his post freezing from the cold and thinking to himself. He had signed up to join the service for the same reasons as most of the educated men; he had wanted to serve in a good cause. Like most of them, he regretted his decision. It was a hard and thankless job that took up ten hours of each day for those who were on patrol duty -- and Julian had no desire to sit behind a desk. Moreover, the work out on the streets was becoming more unpleasant day by day. The attitude of the populace towards the SP was hostile from the start. It is difficult to say just what caused the rising antagonism; in all probability it was the result of envy and the misconduct of patrolmen on duty. People envied the men of the SP their exemption from working at the labor-camps that were being set up for Jews; they envied them their right to move around the city twenty-four hours a day; and most of all, they envied them their freedom to buy food on the Aryan side. No one stopped to consider that the men of the SP did tedious work for which they received no compensation, or that, standing at their

posts, they were exposed to far more dangers than were the ordinary residents of the ghetto. The misconduct by officers of the SP was the work of the rough element in its midst. Some gawky adolescent could hardly be expected to know how to disperse the crowds clustering around the checkpoints by means of words alone, /70/ and this constituted one of the most important duties of the patrolmen posted there. One of the well-bred patrolmen would try to use persuasion to get the crowds to move along; when a half an hour of this left him hoarse, he would resort to using the only weapon in his possession, namely, his truncheon. The callow youth would just skip the talk and go straight for his baton. Both the crowd and officer would be partly in the right. It was not as though the crowd were a bunch of idlers -- these were mothers and fathers who had sent their little children over to the Aryan side in search of food. The officer, [for his part,] had a duty to perform. The Jews could understand why the gendarmes acted as they did, but the behavior of their fellow Jews mystified them. Julian tried to be fair; he did not let it get to him when the crowds pushed up against the police cordon, or when the work he and his colleagues performed earned them only ingratitude.

"Officer, why are you so mean? Let me talk to the gendarme. I'm sure if I ask him, he'll let me go get a loaf of bread for my poor children."

"Please stand back."

"But you just let a friend of mine through."

In fact, the gendarme had allowed a destitute Jewess to pass through the checkpoint a moment earlier. However, at the same time he called Julian (who was in charge of the SP post) over and threatened to put a bullet in his skull if his people did not see to it that nobody else got through. There were incidents and exchanges like these all day long. The gendarmes were as capricious as boarding-school misses, as kind as philanthropists, as vicious as dogs, as tolerant as philosophers and as cruel as Germans. The selfsame German who would talk with Julian about universal themes for half an hour; who would confide his domestic cares to him and show him a photograph of his little son, whom he missed; the same German who advised Julian to flee from Poland if life was dear to him, and who gave him his own breakfast on the sly -- this German could turn around half an hour later and bludgeon an eight-year-old boy to death with his rifle-butt for trying to sneak across from the Aryan side with two loaves of bread. The tiny human rag was handed over to his hysterical mother. The gendarmes were relieved, the witnesses to the incident dispersed and their places were taken by others -- a new crowd gathered at the checkpoint to try their luck. The only ones to remain on the spot from before were the Jewish patrolmen. They decided it was better to be free with their batons than to let Jews put themselves and the patrolmen alike at risk by getting too close to the checkpoint. The blows of the truncheons drew /71/ curses from their fellow Jews. After a day of this sort of thing, Julian would return

home physically and morally spent. He derived no pleasure from the bread he was able to buy on the Aryan side for three zlotys. He tried to ignore the jibes of those he passed by on the street.

"Everything going all right, Mr. Policeman? May you choke on the bread you swiped from some poor worker."

These were the voices of the street, rash impulsive voices. Julian grabbed the heckler by the lapels and had it out with him face to face. Mollified by Julian's calm voice and appealing manner, the stranger offered an apology.

"I didn't mean you, cadet. Maybe you are a decent person."

"Let's say I'm not so decent as you seem to think. Let's say I didn't buy this bread, as I have a right to do as a policeman. Let's say I did take this bread from some worker. Now get this straight: if I hadn't taken it, some Polish cop would have, or some gendarme or Aryan. There's no way this bread could have belonged to any poor worker, because all the workers come back from work at four or five o'clock and I don't leave my post until 8 PM."

"You're absolutely right, sir. Please don't be mad. These are tragic times for all of us. People are dying of hunger. A person feels helpless, and despair makes it hard to think straight. You've convinced me. But I've had two children die of typhus, leaving me with a wife who's suffering from tuberculosis and a skinny little boy eight years old. My wife sends him out every day to smuggle food -

- I only earn enough to buy about a quarter of a loaf of bread a day. He hawks shoelaces. Before the war I had a factory that made knitted garments, maybe you've heard of it? Kraft Enterprises?"

"Do you live at No. 28 Świątojerska?" asked Julian in reply.

"Why yes, how did you know?"

Julian hurried off into the dark, leaving the Jew standing there flabbergasted. The little boy killed that morning was Kraft's son.

The chaos that prevailed during the first few weeks after the ghetto was formed slowly subsided. The Jewish Council had its hands full trying to steer a course between the edicts of the authorities and the needs of the populace. The most urgent problem was that of supplying food for half a million people. The Office of Provisions was headed by Abraham Gepner and an engineer by the name of Sztolcman. Well-known and civic-minded men of good intentions and unblemished reputations, they obtained permission from the authorities to open a network of distribution centers under the name Jewish Supply Enterprises. Approval was also given for them to distribute monthly ration-cards <?> /72/ neatly inscribed with the words "meat," "sugar," "flour," "honey," "marmalade," "potatoes," "lard," and "other." Under this system each person received twelve-and-a-half decagrams of bread per day, plus the same quantity of sugar and a quarter-kilo of marmalade once each month. The Jewish Supply

organization had at its disposal two passes to the Aryan side. (Note: the allotments described above were fixed not by the Germans, but by the Jewish Council.) JOINT <?> tried desperately to expand its activities. The Toz and Centor soup-kitchens, as well as a number of children's centers, were opened with funds provided by JOINT. All of this, however, but merely a drop in the half-million-strong ocean of hungry people. Yet there was actually no shortage of food in the ghetto. With money one could buy all kinds of food, even gourmet items. With money one could buy any quantity of food -- in spite of the walled-off streets, the fences, the barbed wire and the checkpoints manned by gendarmes. The will to live was stronger than any prohibitions or risks. There were a few ways in and out, the very routes that had supposedly been closed. The youngest smugglers were, as before, children. They no longer ran between the legs of the gendarmes; the exits were narrower and better guarded than at first, and every day brought further refinements and improvements in the system. The littlest smugglers were children small enough to fit through the tiny openings for gutters that every <street barrier> had to have. There were legions of these nameless little stalwarts; millions of perils lurked along the path of their arduous work. The first obstacle was the Jewish policeman who patrolled the wall. A "good" policeman took 50 grosze to look the other way. A "bad" one would refuse to be bribed; it wasn't worth it to risk his life for the handful of zlotys he could

collect in a day. The next impediment was the Polish policeman guarding the other side of the wall; the urchins had a couple of methods for dealing with him. They would first try to scoot between his legs and, if that did not work, they would either try to buy him off for three or four zlotys, or take the consequences. Then they had to contend with their Aryan counterparts, boys who demanded their own cut. The term *szmalcownik* was first used to refer to these budding blackmail-artists. Here the Jewish boy had to collect his wits and make a quick decision: could he break out of the ring? How bad a beating would he get if he did not succeed? Would it be better /73/ not to run the risk and try to talk his way out? If he managed somehow to overcome this obstacle, the boy would have to duck and weave so as to avoid running into the same thing all over again. If he got caught a second time, there would be no use in protesting that he had, just a few minutes earlier, either paid up or taken his lumps. The whole time his heart would be pounding and his legs shaking, yet he would pretend to be in no particular hurry, lingering in front of the window displays. The boys called this tactic "acting Aryan." He would buy potatoes, bread and cigarettes, and stuff everything into his trousers or inside the lining of his coat. The load -- several dozen kilograms -- weighed almost as much as he did. The trip back was even worse; his path was strewn with still greater difficulties. He could no longer "act Aryan"; he had to keep a sharp lookout all around, and duck into archways

every few steps. The potatoes got heavier and heavier, making it ever harder to walk. If he was lucky enough to get back to the wall while "his" policeman was still on duty, he would get just enough of a beating to maintain appearances. If someone else was there, he would have to endure a real pummeling, because he had no money left for bribes. He would just tuck in his little head -- he did not even feel the blows anymore. Hungry and chilled to the bone, he had had nothing to eat since five in the morning. <?> after making his way through the muddy gutter-hole, where his mother would be waiting anxiously for him. If he had the goods with him, his highest reward would be the radiant look on the face of his mother or father. If he had had everything taken away, he would be whipped. The little Joseks, Moseks and Sruls did not even cry anymore when this happened.

The first smugglers were the officers of the SP. They were not smugglers in the real sense, but rather intermediaries between Jewish and Aryan wholesalers. This is how it worked. The Jewish wholesaler would approach an SP patrolman and tell him that he had placed an order for one or more cartloads of groceries. After the size of his commission was settled, the policeman would have the task of "turning" the gendarme on duty at the checkpoint. The price of cooperating would be a watch, a briefcase, a pair of gloves, or money. Once he was sure of the gendarme, the patrolman would inform the Jewish wholesaler, who in turn would contact the Aryan by telephone. When the cart arrived

at the designated checkpoint, the gendarme would make a show of checking the entry-papers. That was all there was to it. Even though every precaution was observed, the shipments often got "burned." Usually this occurred when a German inspection-team showed up at the checkpoint just as the shipment was about to cross over to the ghetto side; other times there would be some mix-up /74/ and the "wrong" gendarme would end up checking the cart. (For the gendarmes did not work together; they distrusted each other.) Such deliveries would be seized. The loss was borne chiefly by the Jewish wholesaler, or by the patrolman who escorted the cart -- there were those who willingly stood security for the entire value of the shipment in exchange for a higher commission.

Another kind of smuggling was carried on at night across the walls guarded by the Polish police. This form of bootlegging was monopolized by the residents of the apartment buildings adjacent to the wall. Ladders would be erected on both sides, and for a couple of hours consignments of flour, groats, lard, and even poultry would pass by this route. This was an extremely dangerous procedure; hardly a night went by without a few people being shot by a German patrol, either inside the ghetto or on the other side of the wall. However, this did not deter the smugglers: as the danger increased, so did prices.

The Joseks, Moseks and Sruls understood, and did not cry anymore. For those who had money there was no problem about getting enough to eat.

The streets of the ghetto took on a singular appearance, one of squalor and overcrowding adorned with the Star of David. Those Aryans who had been given extra time to vacate the ghetto had all departed by now. The only ones left were the caretakers of apartment buildings, who stayed on alone without their families. The Jewish Community was screening candidates to replace them. The streets were so crowded that there was no way to move faster than the surging mass of humanity, unless one got off the sidewalks and walked in the streets. In the narrower lanes, the sidewalks and the pavement were equally packed. As if it were not already bad enough that so many people were jammed together onto a few dozen streets, the overcrowding was compounded by piles of snow that reached up to a man's head. Trash collection and snow removal were problems that the Jewish Council was wrestling with. The Community had already come up with a plan and lined up contractors with carts and work-crews, but had to cool its heels waiting for permission that was never forthcoming. The authorities were in no particular hurry to resolve the matter.

Over all of this rose the Star of David. The blue star against a white background was carried on every arm, and was affixed to every shop-door. /75/ The few streetcars that ran in the ghetto displayed, in place of numbers, a round white

disc with a blue star. The price of a ticket was four times higher than on the Aryan side. Officers of the SP had emblems bearing engraved stars on the caps; the star also appeared on the ration-cards. During mass in the church on Leszno Avenue, Jewish converts to Catholicism knelt wearing white armbands with the blue star on their right sleeve. Council President Czerniaków wore the blue star, and so did the beggar in the street. Beggars no longer went from door to door; they did not have the strength to negotiate the stairs or go around the stores. They stood or lay against the walls of apartment buildings like spectral guards in their foul-smelling rags or burlap sacks fastened with twine, through which their swollen flesh showed purplish-green. They stood beneath the walls with all their worldly possessions at their feet: a red goose-down quilt or a pillow, on which nestled children who had gone to bed hungry -- who in many cases had gone to their eternal rest. As evening fell their mothers or fathers would bid them farewell with a sigh of relief. They would take the remnants of clothing off the tiny bluish-green skeletons and sell the scraps to the ragman. In the morning, Pinkiert's carts would gather up the corpses from the streets of the ghetto. During the month of April the Jewish cemetery recorded four thousand deaths from typhus and starvation.

On <4.2.44?>, Sabina brought news from town.

"You can't imagine what's going on out there. People are walking about loaded down with bundles and rucksacks <?>.

This morning the residents of Krakowskie Przedmieście, Stare Miasto and Powiśle were ordered to clear out of their apartments by 10 AM."

What's it all about?"

"No one has any idea. Supposedly they can all go back at five o'clock."

"It's evacuation!" cried Irena joyfully. Everyone became excited, except Julian, who kept silent. They gathered around him.

"Say what's on your mind."

"Don't be in such a hurry to celebrate. Most likely, some German bigshot is going to be passing through. I'm sure the residents will get to return to their apartments at 5 PM. If you want my opinion, the Germans are killing two birds with one stone: they're clearing the streets for some motorcade and finding out how the people react to this sort of thing at the same time."

(Description of search on Leszno.)

In the evening Stasiek confirmed Julian's hypothesis. The streets had been cleared for the funeral cortège bearing the body of SS General Hess, who had been assassinated.

/76/ On February 2, 1944, the German press reported that Łuck and Równe had been evacuated.

The typhus epidemic decimated the population, both young and old. <?> made enormous efforts to contain the spread of the disease. Compulsory vaccinations were introduced, as well as compulsory baths in the poorhouses. Children in

orphanages and boarding-schools were vaccinated. It was all for naught; the epidemic, rather than subsiding, only intensified. Lice migrated from the dirty to the clean, from the sick to the healthy, on the streets, in the streetcars, in the offices. "If the war doesn't end soon, we'll all starve to death." Such was the constant refrain during the first months of the ghetto's existence. One heard it in the streets, in the cafes and pastry-shops, at the theater and at concerts, over a glass of vodka... Cafes, restaurants and pastry-shops were springing up like mushrooms after a rain. They all thrived, and were packed with customers. Ladies in elegant furs, who wore stylish hats on their exquisitely coifed heads, sat with gentlemen in fine pre-war suits at little cafe tables drinking demitasses of black coffee and eating pastries that cost three zlotys apiece. They applauded the stage-performers, filled the concert-halls, theaters and restaurants, and complained about the outrageous prices. Some said that the popularity of the nightspots was cause for giving up hope; people were saying "I don't care anymore," and looking for ways to forget it all. Others maintained that Jews still had a lot of money. Although those who did have money and who were desperate enough to fling it away scarcely amounted to more than a few percent of the whole population (10,000 at most), when set alongside the masses of ordinary people struggling to get by each day, they presented a picture every bit as depressing as that of the ragged beggars with their bellies distended from hunger.

The ghetto was in the process of becoming an autonomous German protectorate. It had its own police force, its own courts, Health Department, Office of Provisions, transportation, cultural and recreational facilities, charities and social services. All of it was under the authority of the Jewish Council; all of it had been brought into being by the Council acting either on its own initiative or at the behest of the Germans. Judging from appearances, one might have drawn the conclusion that the Council wielded real power.

Evidently there was one thing still lacking in the Warsaw ghetto. So, one dark day, yet another "Department" was set up: the *Überwachungsstelle*<?>, or Department for Combating Usury in the Jewish Quarter of Warsaw. The Department was not subordinate to the Jewish Council, but reported instead directly to the Germans. It was organized by one Moryc Kohn who started out as a "muser" <?> and moved to acting as a go-between in prisoner-releases and supplying the Germans with luxury items ranging from coffee and tea to leather furniture. He was a [regular] walking encyclopedia of the ghetto, and daily disgorged his knowledge at No. 25 Szucha Avenue. /77/ From one day to the next he was better-dressed, better-fed and wealthier. He worked cautiously and left no traces behind him. His name never appeared next to that of his victim. He had his contacts who steered work his way; he had his Germans who doted on him. He was determined to emerge from the shadows and make Moryc Kohn a household

name in the ghetto. He took no one into his confidence, nor was he on terms of intimacy with anyone, but he paid handsome commissions. He had one friend, an associate from Łódź who had been his partner in a few penny-ante swindles before the war. This man's name was Zysze Heller. He was Kohn's inseparable companion. In his capacity as accountant, he managed all of Kohn's financial affairs and set the commission rates. He paid the bills and took in the receipts. Moryc handled the public-relations end of things. Moryc was ambitious, and had made a name for himself during the war. He was rich and had both influence and money. His income was enormous; he had never dreamed that he would one day be so rich back when he was hatching his petty schemes and having visions of hitting it big. Moryc came from an upstanding family of observant Jews. His four brothers had reputations that were beyond reproach.

Moryc decided to do something that would set the whole ghetto talking, something for which the ghetto would thank him. He confided his intentions to his partner. Heller laughed.

"Moryc, is this you? What do you need with an organization? A campaign to combat usury? Who are you going to do battle with? What's it to you if people traffic in food? You want to become a public benefactor? You got too much money, give it to the poor."

Moryc was not to be dissuaded. He explained what he had in mind.

"We'll bring in the most distinguished people to join our organization, people with good names, lawyers and doctors. They'll inspect the sanitary conditions in the stores and check the weights. We'll regulate prices. We'll run soup-kitchens for the poor."

"And who is going to pay for all of this?"

"I am!"

Heller paced the floor nervously, trying in vain to talk him out of it. Moryc was set on his idea, and would carry it out come what may.

"If you don't want to work with me anymore, that's too bad. We can go our separate ways."

This was not what Heller had in mind.

"But what about our other operations?"

"We'll keep them going, but we'll pick and choose carefully. You won't take on any of the small stuff anymore. And as far as the take is concerned, you needn't worry. Within the anti-usury department, we'll set up a real-estate control board. You'll see, Zysze, things will turn out just fine. Our people will be decked out just like the SP. They'll have the same kind of caps, and the officers will get stars. You'll see, Zysze, you'll look like Szeryński himself."

Moryc Kohn had connections; getting the necessary approval was a cinch. He had his Germans who liked and trusted him. He obtained permission to create a Department for Combating Usury, /78/ which was to report exclusively to

the German authorities. He was empowered to hire 250 men, who would be in uniform and wear green armbands bearing the inscription "Überwachungsstelle." They were divided into two categories, enlisted men and officers. The insignia of rank were the same as those for the SP, with gold buttons for the officers and stars on both armbands and caps. The caps differed from those worn by the Jewish police in having green rims instead of blue ones. At the same time Kohn obtained permission to create a Real Estate Trust Board, which in practical terms gave him administrative control over every residential building in the Jewish Quarter. Finding quarters [for the new institution] was also easy; Kohn found a spacious six-room suite at No. 13 Leszno Avenue. From the street number the Überwachungsstelle came to be known as "No. 13." Everything went according to plan until it came time to hire his office colleagues. Moryc elected not to bring in any "professionals." <?> Even his partner and friend was merely a figurehead, a glorified cashier who handled disbursements for administrative expenses. Moryc had a difficult time persuading his own brother Maks to join the embryonic enterprise. Maks was hard up. He lived off what his wife earned as a lab technician <?>, and what he himself brought in selling suits and jewelry. At first Niuta was deadset against the idea of her husband having anything to do with Moryc, who had been the reason why Mrs. Wolkowicz had opposed her marriage to Maks before the war. Poverty, Moryc's cajolery and the vistas of wealth that he spread

before her eyes served to win her over. Next was Niuta's neighbor, the lawyer Brakmson, who was well-known and highly respected before the war, followed by Gancwejel the editor, the lawyers Szrajer and Lewin, and a few other lawyers who were less well known but who came from solid and talented families with immaculate reputations. It looked as though everything would fall into place just as Moryc had envisioned it: one good name would attract ten more. But in life it is hard to escape one's past all at once -- to make one's way out of the demi-monde and enter the world of respectable society. At the very last moment fate, working through his German superiors, played a dirty trick on Moryc. They saddled him with a partner, a person by the name of Szternfeld. Dawid Szternfeld, Kohn's colleague by trade, was just as well-connected, rich and ambitious as he was. Before the war he had been a small-time procurer -- a go-between actually -- and the proprietor of a bawdy house in Łódź. He was married to one of his former girls, now "retired." He wanted to be something more than just Szternfeld the petty informer. /79/ Once a career non-commissioned army officer, he forced himself on Moryc with the demand that he be made commandant of the Department's military bureau. Szternfeld requested, and got, German approval for his appointment, which put Kohn in an awkward position: he could not very well explain that he did not trust a fellow crook and that he had other plans. So he gave Szternfeld the position he had already picked out for himself, namely, commandant of the

military bureau. And while one swallow does not make a spring, one mangy sheep can ruin a whole herd. Szternfeld was followed by Gancwejel, who was given the responsibility of hiring district commanders according to his own discretion. Moryc was not to interfere with Szternfeld's militia, and Szternfeld in turn was to leave administrative matters entirely up to Kohn.

Before the war Gancwejel had been the editor of a minor Jewish periodical published in Polish either in Sosnowiec or in Będzin --no one was quite sure which. He was an honest-looking cultured man with a broad range of knowledge in the arts and in life. He made a positive impression on people, but it was a misleading one. There was nothing he could be accused of; his name was never linked to swindles, informing or shady dealings of any kind. And yet it was common knowledge that he maintained close contacts with the Germans and had a pass to the Aryan side.

The day Szternfeld and Gancwejel the editor showed up, Moryc's spirits drooped and his hopes for "No. 13" were dashed. Kohn had been seeking out and trying to win over people with sterling reputations. Szternfeld sought out his own kind. Szternfeld's aim was to become the terror of the ghetto, a formidable Gestapo-man with his own staff of like-minded associates. Kohn wanted to emblazon his name with golden letters in the history of the ghetto, but instead of breaking with his past, he felt himself sinking deeper than ever before into the muck. He quit "No. 13," keeping only

fifty apartment buildings under his control. In the process he lost 50,000 zlotys, the sum he had spent on organizing the department. Dawid Szternfeld became head of the *Überwachungsstelle*, with three-star rank; his deputy was Gancwejel, who also had three stars. the attorneys were awarded two-star rank, and some of the young Gestapo-men were deemed worthy of a star apiece.

Moryc's departure from "No. 13" was not emulated by any of the reputable people he had recruited, even though Szternfeld's agenda differed vastly from Kohn's. Szternfeld left intact the salaries that Moryc had set for the lawyers and other men of good reputations. Moryc was not about to give up on his plans. He rented a space at No. 14 Leszno Avenue, and a few days later the firm of M. Kohn & Z. Heller opened its doors. /80/ The main office was at No. 14 Leszno, with a warehouse located at No. 15 Orła Street. Kohn hired a multitudinous staff of office-workers. The House of Kohn & Heller bought all kinds of articles and wares produced in the ghetto and sold them to the Germans. Moryc had his own office with a bronze statue of Victory on his desk. Zysze Heller had a separate office. In the reception area at Kohn & Heller sat small manufacturers, middlemen, business executives, rabbis, writers, tearful women whose relatives had been imprisoned, and youthful informers. The doormen admitted them one at a time during business hours; German officers were the only ones who could enter out of turn.

The ghetto had become an autonomous state under a German protectorate. The ghetto had its own version of everything: its own government -- the Jewish Council; its police -- the SP; its own branch of the Gestapo -- No. 13; an Office of Provisions; a Health Department; a hospital system and quarantine facilities; and public baths. It had its own poorhouses, cemetery and horse-drawn streetcars, built and put into service by Kohn & Heller. If one could have resurrected a few people who died in the fifteenth century and shown them the Warsaw ghetto, they would not have been all that surprised [at what they saw]. But if people from the present time, people who lived as we do in the twentieth century, but without Germans, were brought here, they would say: "It's a bit crowded where you live." <Those from the fifteenth century would say:> "We didn't have so many poor. You have beautiful homes and splendid vehicles for conveying people in comfort. You'd better watch out. We doubt that they'll let you stay here. We were burned at the stake." <To which one might reply:> "Jews never learn from the experience of centuries, nor from that of their own individual lives. Don't waste your breath: Jews are cautious optimists. We brought you back to life so that you could have a look at a twentieth-century ghetto. Go back to sleep now, return to the dead and tell them that nothing has changed in the world." But those from the twentieth century, who did not live with the Germans, would ask some difficult

questions. "Who are these Jews wearing navy-blue caps with yellow rims and tin badges in their lapels?"

"That's the SP -- the police."

"What do they do? Why are some of them so poorly dressed, while others look well off?"

"The well-dressed ones are lucky: they get to work the checkpoints. Either that, or they have something put away from before the war. Most of the others are barely surviving."

"And what about the ones in the blue caps with the green rims?"

"Those belong to No. 13. The campaign against usury." Here it would not hurt to give a knowing wink.

"What does that mean?"

"The officers from No. 13 make the rounds of the stores in their district and check on the weights and prices."

"And why are these sick people lying in the street, in gateways and under the walls of buildings."

"They aren't sick. Those are poor beggars."

/81/ "Beggars? But they have sores on their foreheads, and they're all swollen."

One would have to explain: "The first stage of hunger is the sensation itself -- the constant insatiable craving for food. This causes the swelling; the hands, feet and face all swell up. Then the sores start to appear -- loathsome-smelling and putrescent sores. The body decomposes while

still living. From the hunger children take on the sagging yellowish-green wizened appearance of the elderly."

"Don't the well-dressed passers-by give them anything?"

"Usually not. In any case, not enough to keep them from starving to death. Each one of these well-dressed individuals has a few indigent refugees in his own family to look after."

"Who are the ones with the green armbands?"

"Those are also Jews, vile people who work for the Germans. Their armbands say: *Rohstoffverwertungsstelle*. They are exempted from having to wear the white armbands. They supply the Germans with rags, scrap iron, glass and various kinds of junk."

"Why is there garbage piled up in all the courtyards? That spreads disease."

"The Jewish Council still hasn't obtained permission to haul the garbage out of the ghetto, and there's no incinerator. Take a good look at our beggars. Drop by our poorhouses. Master your disgust, <?>, and plunge into this foul and sticky atmosphere. Clench your jaws tight for a few moments, fight off the stench hanging in the air, and cast your gaze on people felled by hunger. For long, long weeks they decompose, they rot away before giving up the ghost. Look -- they lie there on bare wood cots with nothing but loose feathers around them; they've sold everything else. Lice and feathers cling to their stinking sores. Now go back out onto the street and have a look: that well-fed, nattily

dressed fellow lolling there in the rickshaw, the one without an armband -- he's a Jew, too. He works for the Gestapo. And see that one, who's just grabbed that lady's parcel? Those are the *chapery*: starving boys and girls fighting to survive, our young people who lie in wait for a passer-by with a package that looks like a loaf of bread or a bit of breakfast. He'll snatch it away, and bite into it right through the wrapper. Sometimes it's bread, sometimes a whole breakfast of raw fish or a piece of meat. He'll make the grab all right, but he won't get away -- the streets are too crowded. He'll swallow a few mouthfuls while some enraged pedestrians beat him. He neither feels the blows nor hears them shouting, but goes right on eating.

/82/ "Stand by the walls and watch how the poor little children conduct their smuggling operations, how cold and overburdened they are. Observe the stoicism with which they endure beatings from the policeman, the gendarme and the Polish street-urchins; [note] the joy and pride that light up the little faces of these diminutive heroes as they hand over their ten kilos of contraband to their mothers.

"Step into the cemetery, and see how they dig huge communal graves each day. Take a look at the condition of the corpses that get pitched into those graves.

"Now go back and tell what you've seen. Ah: you are overwhelmed, doubly overwhelmed. They won't believe you."

At Passover, the Jewish Council was granted permission to bake matzo. Each resident of the ghetto received two-and-

a-half kilos of matzo. JOINT distributed tens of thousands of parcels. Moryc Kohn distributed five thousand kilos of matzo. Candles were lit in every Jewish home. In the cramped little rooms the rotten stinking floorboards had been scrubbed clean of rubbish and filth; the broken and cracked windowpanes gleamed; and the torn and patched tablecloths were a blaze of white. It was the first Passover in the ghetto. All day long Aniela Traube had fought back the tears welling up in her eyes, tears of remembrance, tears of worry and emotion. She spread a snow-white cloth on the table, and lit the candles in the silver candlesticks, a wedding present from her mother. She covered her eyes with her hands and let a fervent whispered prayer pour forth with her tears: "Thank you, o God, that thou hast returned my son to me from the war, and hast preserved my husband and children." Besides the two large candlesticks there were the two smaller ones modern design that belonged to Róža (a wedding gift from her mother Aniela), as well as Basia's two candles placed on the lid of a tea-tin. To the seder the Traubes invited the Pomerancenbaums and Cwajfuses with their two little girls. Jakub Traube passed out Haggadoth to everyone, pointed to the matzo, and in a voice hoarse with emotion, started to pose the question: "Matzo is the bread of want..." He was interrupted by a child's bright voice -- "Why the bread of want? Matzo tastes very good with milk." Everyone laughed. Mr. Traube, however, preserved his dignity and said solemnly: "I will tell you why it is called the bread of want, and why

we eat matzo on this day. You see, children, it is for a remembrance, because our ancestors, when they were fleeing from Egypt after <?> years of captivity, they..." He did not finish his sentence, so moved was he by the suffering of their ancestors. His voice would not obey him, and there was a lengthy pause before he concluded: "...they didn't have time to leaven the dough. /83/ That is why, as a remembrance, we eat matzo today." He looked down at the Haggadah in front of him. "The first section tells us how we were once enslaved, that we might remember this and not give way to pride. Read the next sentence: 'Let each one who is hungry eat together with us. Today we are here, but next year we shall be in Jerusalem, in our homeland.'"

He bent over the Haggadah and read on. "First, about our suffering in Egypt on this day; second, about the way it should be now -- our obligations to the poor; third, about what is to come, what is to come..." With a heavy sigh, he gazed at the gently glowing candles and gave voice to the most beautiful hope of the Jewish people: that the Messiah would come, the Savior. "It is the hope of all Jews that the Prophet will appear one seder evening and lead them to the Promised Land. Do you understand, children, how beautifully this is written here?"

"Sure, that's just beautiful," replied Julian. "We already have our Jewish Messiah, and his name is Hitler. As for the Messiah who's supposed to show up on a seder evening, you'd better supplicate the Lord God there in the Haggadah to

keep it from being some gendarme who turns up at the door. Every year for decades now Jews have been praying: 'Next year in Jerusalem,' but they have gone on living in countries that don't want them."

"But all the Jews can't go to Palestine," objected Karol.

"I'm not saying they can. I'm talking about boobs like you and me, and a lot of others, who not only had the chance but most importantly the money, and still didn't go."

"You can't approach the question from such a narrow standpoint. You're overlooking such things as a person's feelings of attachment to the place where he was born, to its customs and language. You're forgetting that you yourself came back to Poland, when you had a bright future in France. You didn't want to give up your Polish citizenship, so you returned home."

"That's exactly why I maintain that Hitler is the Messiah of the Jews. He has shown them that where you were born means nothing, that it's time to tear this sentimental attachment up by the roots and start thinking in a different way. Do you recall what our fellow Jews said when they were thrown out of Germany back in 19--? Do you remember how they advised us to flee? Yet we stayed put. We had the opportunity to escape to Russia and we didn't take it. /84/ It's that Jewish optimism, that idiotic Jewish 'things will turn out somehow.'"

"Children, don't quarrel," Jakub intervened. "Julian, you are right, and Karol is right. No one can go against his destiny. We are an unfortunate nation, a nation of wanderers. We have no country of our own. Palestine is small, it doesn't have room for all of the Jews, and as for the other countries where Jews can live comfortably -- it's all an illusion: it lasts only until someone decides to use the Jews as a whipping-boy to further his own career. Were the Jews so badly off in Germany? Weren't the Jews in Germany, before Hitler, the most loyal and patriotic of citizens? These same refugees from Germany that you just mentioned had only the highest praise for the Germans. It was just the Hitler youth that they complained about. They never referred to their country by any other name than *Vaterland*, in the most exalted sense of the word. Let's not spoil the mood with such squabbling. Allow me to finish the first part of the Haggadah, or you'll never get your supper." And he intoned: "*Holachmo anjo!*"

The Jewish Quarter in Warsaw. Two worlds: one belonging to free people (albeit under occupation), and the other enclosed within it, a world of people branded with the stigma of their nationality. The summer sun knew neither caste nor prejudice, made no distinction among the races, but shone down equally on Aryan and Jew alike. It shone down and baked<?> the asphalt of the ghetto's clean streets with an even heat. The ghetto stifled<?> from lack of air and room. The beggars peddled their last rags; the sun and the warmth

were a blessing to them. They did not feel the closeness or the crowding. The dust did not bother them, nor did the fumes from the garbage heaps, or the lack of space. Their attention was transfixed by the single longing to appease their hunger, to appease a hunger that had been clamoring incessantly for months -- a hunger that was gnawing their entrails, manifesting itself in grotesque swellings, causing ulcers within, and erupting in fetid sores. This hunger moaned with thousands of voices. Soft groans and wailing echoed from the walls of the ghetto and beat against the ears of well-fed passers-by. Here and there one of them would give a grosz or two; the rest walked by with indifference - their eyes had become inured to the sight of these hideous figures. "I won't give you a thing, because I have to live off what I can sell off; I don't have any income. Nothing can save those against the wall anyway. If this goes on much longer, I'll wind up against the wall myself one day."

There was not a single garden within the boundaries of the Jewish Quarter. There were a few squares, with a few scrawny trees scattered about, and a couple of courtyards where some enterprising individuals /85/ had started building cafes and playgrounds for children. So a group of painters came to ask for Julian's help in constructing a playground for children. On Mylna Street there was a lot with a dozen or so trees growing on it. The land was the property of a Protestant church. Before the war there had been a number of fruit-trees here. The orchard had formed part of the grounds

of a palace located to the rear of the church. When the Jewish Quarter was created, the church on Leszno Avenue and the hospital on Karmelicka wound up inside the ghetto. The church's picket fence was pulled down and replaced with a wall; the hospital gate was bricked up and its windows covered with fine wire mesh. A [new] entrance to the church and the hospital was cut through a building on <?>. The orchard was split in two by a high wall that stood outside the ghetto. As caretakers for the tract of land that remained inside the ghetto, the Protestant church appointed the sculptor Ostrzega and the painter Weintraub. Before the war they ran a business that turned out artistically-carved headstones. Together with some other artists they decided to convert the lot into a playground for children. Julian readily agreed to supervise the work. His job with the police did not take up a lot of his time, and his fellow officers were all too willing to stand in for him and earn a few extra zlotys. The church's elders agreed to lease the property for a nominal annual sum. The original partners in the venture were Ostrzega, Weintraub, Eliowicz and Reing. However, when they drew up a budget, their combined resources turned out to be hopelessly inadequate. The partnership was enlarged to include Traube and the artists Finkelstein and Puterman, whom Julian had met abroad. Gardeners set to work planting <shrubbery>, creating flowerbeds and tilling patches of ground for growing tomatoes and other vegetables. The property was huge, and the partners decided to exploit it to

the full. While the work was in progress, Julian came up with a scheme to divide the lot into two parts. He proposed that one of these be set aside for the playground, and the other used for a cafe. His enthusiasm persuaded the others to go along with the idea, and Julian took it upon himself to handle all the details of setting up and operating the concession. The work proceeded briskly. The wire netting around the old orchard was replaced with a palisade fence, along which a row of hop-plants was set out. They rented the caretaker's cottage that stood at the far end of the lot; the caretaker retained the use of a little room in the attic. His name was Jan Korolko, and he was a good musician who had been a member of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra before the war. At present he was a caretaker and wore a second armband that said "*Hausmeister*."

/86/ On the ground floor of the cottage, Julian installed a kitchen and put in tables. They bought hundreds of chairs and dozens of tables from a cafe that was going out of business. Carpenters and joiners built everything else on the premises. The kitchen staff were all professional chefs, and Julian leased the kitchen itself to Grisza's father, Szejlan, who for many years had owned the most elegant spa in Ciechocinek. The waitresses were all to be attractive-looking women. This was the prevailing custom in the ghetto, and all the cafes employed beautiful women as their waitresses: doctors' and lawyers' wives, as well as pretty young ladies from the best families. From among several

hundred applicants Julian chose eleven women. Julian suggested hiring a modern jazz ensemble, but the artists were flatly opposed to this idea. "We don't want to have some trendy dive that's going to attract war profiteers and riffraff who live off of other people's misfortunes. If there has to be live music, let's have a trio off in a corner playing good music that's pleasant and dignified." Julian had to give in, even though he knew full well that most of the customers they could hope to attract were precisely those people who carried on shady deals, and not the cream of society, who were sitting home and selling off their possessions to make ends meet.

The artists unanimously nominated Jan Korolko as music director. Julian enlarged the balcony outside Korolko's room and had a piano installed there. The grand opening was set for May 15th. The authorities granted approval for a playground and a cafe that was to offer musical entertainment and be known as the Artists' Garden. The weather held up, and all the work was completed on time. The prospects for the new concern were exceptionally promising -- it had practically no competition. Scarcely two other such open-air establishments were to be found in the entire ghetto. A number of bushes that had survived the bombing of Warsaw were in full bloom, and the expertly-tended flowerbeds were starting to turn green. The invitations went out. Julian was so immersed in his work that the days flashed by. Having shouldered the entire responsibility for the cafe, he had

supervised everything from the construction on down to the smallest purchase. The playground had already gotten off to an encouraging start, and the little voices of children mingled gaily with the sound of hammers putting on the finishing touches.

/87/ On opening day Julian peered anxiously at the overcast sky. He had already given up all hope when the sun began to break through the clouds. The waitresses listened to their final instructions while squinting nervously in their compact-mirrors. The first guests began to arrive. Czerniaków came by car accompanied by his wife and his deputy, the engineer Lichtenbaum. "I wish you success, gentlemen, with this new wartime venture," said President Czerniaków, shaking Julian's hand. Szeryński made his entrance attended by both of the Czapliński brothers, two-star district commanders in the SP. "I wish you success, gentlemen. May I remind you, Mr. Director, that your establishment falls under the jurisdiction of District No. 3 of the SP?" Dawid Szternfeld (three stars) and Gancwejel the editor (three stars) entered with their retinue. "A very lovely garden," said Szternfeld by way of praise. "Your enterprise is subject to the authority of our department, the *Überwachungsstelle*." Moryc Kohn and Zysze Heller sat down at a large reserved table in the pavilion. They were soon joined by a motley coterie of their suppliers.

"I congratulate you on your success," said the director of JOINT, Giterman. "I hope that your friends will find a

cosy refuge in your garden." "My congratulations on a well-chosen harem," said Genia Braun.

Every seat in the garden was filled. Jan Korolko did the best he could: from the balcony wafted the strains of orchestral waltzes and czardas. The company at the artists' table, which included the proprietors, their friends and a couple of writers, was delighted with the cafe and the music that drifted down from the balcony. The garden was indeed beautiful. The ramshackle, half-sunken cottage painted pink; the orchestra on the balcony; the well-designed pergolas and the pavilion; the flowering lilac-bushes that concealed the lower part of the house from view; the colorful clientele: together they formed a whole that was pleasing and endearing to the eye. It was so different from the sights to be seen in the street nearby that the garden's success seemed all but assured. And yet during the next few days, despite the fine weather, business fell off disastrously. There were fewer customers every day. Julian blamed it all on the orchestra; he cited the tastes of the wartime public in support of his accusation. However, the artists were of the opinion that their trio was charming, and that a modern jazz orchestra would ruin the character of the garden. "Don't forget," they countered, "that we are artists. We don't want a hangout with a modern orchestra. You talked us into opening a cafe, and that was already a major concession on our part. All we wanted was to create a playground, but since we have the cafe, we want you to run it for /88/ for our kind of patrons

-- fellow artists and decent people looking for a chance to unwind and get a breath of fresh air. We can't allow the Artists' Garden -- the very name says what kind of place it is -- to become a gathering-place for "No. 13" and the likes of Mr. Kohn and the Jewish Gestapo." Julian tried to point out that artists did not have any money; that it was the clientele that set the tone in every establishment; and that this clientele was one and the same in all the cafes and restaurants in the ghetto. It amounted to a couple of thousand customers in all who went from place to place and were not too fastidious in their tastes. His arguments were in vain... But when the cafe was still half-empty two weeks later, when instead of being self-supporting it began to be an increasing drain on the income from the playground, the artists had to throw in the towel. Julian tore down the balcony, Korolko was dismissed, and the carpenters knocked together a bandstand for Zygmunt Berland's seven-man jazz combo. A dozen boys were sent out into the streets with placards advertising the change in the Artists' Garden. The cafe filled to capacity. Julian rubbed his hands with satisfaction, while the artists went around with hang-dog expressions. "I can't understand," said Ostrzęga, "how anyone could like this musical clowning around." "And this band leader who plays all of the instruments is obviously making fun of the customers," added Eliowicz. The artists were inconsolable. The change in orchestras had necessitated the addition of two private rooms, a free-standing bar and a

cardroom. Three-quarters of the clientele were officials of "No. 13," Kohn & Heller *et consortes*. The receipts rose daily, and in a couple of weeks Julian was able to pay off the cafe's debts. The artists resigned themselves to accepting their share of the proceeds. The six artists resolved unanimously to set aside a portion of the money for the benefit of their fellow artists. Altogether there were eighteen artists in the ghetto who were well known to the public at large. They survived on handouts from JOINT, the Social Security Department, and the president of the Council, who from time to time would buy one painting from each artists for his collections. They lived in poverty, and painted. They had no heads for business, beyond selling off their personal belongings. They had no idea how to cut deals, but lived by and for their art, and conversations about art. They gathered every day at the Artists' Garden and carried on lengthy disputes about art. They guarded their own ideas jealously, they quarreled and exchanged taunts, but they were filled with mutual affection and gave each other assistance.

/89/ The butt of all their jokes was Trachter, to whom they gave the affectionate nickname of Symchale. Trachter had a rich father, from whom he had recently inherited a part interest in some large apartment buildings. His miserliness was common knowledge to his friends and the general public alike. His paintings were bold in execution, subtle in line and breathtaking in technique. He was a master of the

palette-knife, his tool of choice. When one looked at his albino head with its nearly white hair, his pale eyes surrounded by white eyelashes and eyebrows, at his obtuse immobile rosy and expressionless face, it was difficult to believe that an artist of such magnitude was hidden behind this mask. He was no deep thinker, as he himself was the first to admit, but there was one thing that he stood firm on, and that was his art.

"Symchale! Lend me a zloty."

He would give a languid and forced smile, as if it cost him an effort. "You know very well that I don't have any money." With this he would pull out a battered old wallet which invariably contained a little key, a couple of buttons and twenty grosze.

"Come on, open it up wider!" Once, years ago, they had caught him with a large sum of money in another compartment of his wallet.

"I really don't have any."

"What kind of landlord are you, if you don't even have a zloty to your name?"

Roman Kramsztyk and Samuel Puterman were laughing their heads off. They were strangers to the artistic scene in Warsaw. They had been living in Paris, and had come to Poland for a few weeks when the war overtook them.

"Symchale, how about a free pass to the bathhouse?" One of his properties, the arcade at No. 13 Nalewki Street, housed a public bath.

"I can't give out passes," he replied, embarrassed. "I'm not allowed to do that, but if you meet me there tomorrow I can let you in."

"Thanks for nothing. And you call yourself a friend." They chided him with <mock?> sympathy amid a hail of laughter.

The Jewish Quarter in Warsaw acquired three new institutions: an emergency service, the *Eildienst* and the Jewish prison. The emergency service was formed by the editor Gancwajgl. His wife was its [chief] patroness and Sirota, the son of the well-known cantor, was its director. The service was located at No. 32 Elektoralna Street, apartment 4, and had at its disposal a medical staff, forty other employees and one rickshaw. The director, Sirota, for some unknown reason bore the title of inspector. He wore a blue cap like a policeman's, with three stars and a red rim, and an armband that read *Ratungsstelle*. The doctors, administrators and ordinary employees had insignia of the same kind, except that the management wore one or two stars, while the rest had from one to three gold buttons in the form of octagons.

/90/ Nobody knew what the emergency service did -- or rather, everyone knew that it did nothing at all. There were few accidents, and whenever one did occur and someone was injured, the SP patrolmen took care of it. The cap and armband shielded their wearers from the roundups and the regular drafts for labor-camp duty that were conducted by the

Labor Battalion. Young men who did not get jobs in the SP or in "No. 13" stormed the Emergency Service to obtain the few dozen new slots there.

The *Eildienst*, or Messenger Bureau, was set up by a Mr. Umański, the former owner of a large wholesale firm in Poznań. The emergency service was answerable not to the Jewish Council, but solely to Mr. Gancwajgl. The messengers wore green caps with light-blue rims and shields bearing the word *Eildienst* with black numerals on a white background. Mr. Umański and a few inspectors wore green caps but instead of the usual cloth rims, they had velvet ones with embroidered stars and narrow silver stripes. The officials of the *Eildienst* were also exempt from forced labor. The labor camps were a constant nightmare for tens of thousands between the ages of sixteen and forty. All men in this age group were subject to conscription, unless they had a job with the SP, the Council, JOINT, or a similar organization. Jews with money could get out of the obligation by paying a fee to the Council; the fees were set by the Labor Battalion <?>. This led to a situation in which only the poorest of the poor were shipped off to work. They would be grabbed on the street or dragged out of their apartments in the middle of the night. Half-dressed, with worn-out shoes on their feet, they would be hauled by the Jewish police down to one of their district stations, and held there for several hours. (Around November 1941.) A small number would be released when their wives, mothers or sisters shelled out their last

grosze to ransom them. The rest would be transported in groups to the Council, where the Germans would pick them up and dispatch them to work on German farms, build roads, or construct levees and clear snags along the Vistula. One in ten succumbed to the beatings, disease, hunger, cold and lice. The survivors would return from hard labor covered with sores and swollen from malnutrition; their ragged clothing would fall off their emaciated bodies in chunks. They buried their fellow unfortunates in makeshift cemeteries -- ditches and latrines -- and returned to their wretched flats even poorer than they had been a few months earlier. They would find only a part of their families there to greet them: [during their absence,] /91/ wives, children, fathers or mothers would have died. And they would not be back for long. With the next draft, it would be their turn again -- the turn of the poor, who could not get an office job anywhere and had to live from day to day. The unproductive element, as the Germans called them: the victims of democracy in the Warsaw Jewish Community, and of the young intelligentsia who filled the cafes and restaurants thanks to a sham work document or an exemption-card duly purchased from the Community. Through the Jewish Council the Germans obtained their requisite quota of laborers, and were uninterested -- or pretended to be uninterested -- in the rest. The Jewish Community needed money and a supply of labor. The money flowed in from Jews. The Warsaw Jewish Community, which before the war had provided relief funds,

saved people from eviction, and come to their aid in distress, now took the well-to-do intelligentsia under its wing and condemned the very poor to death. Many a helpless fist was raised in front of the edifice on Grzybowska Street. The windows of the red-brick building bore witness to more than one protest, more than one lament, by unhappy women -- mothers, wives and sisters of those who had gone to the labor-camps. Or they were mothers, wives and sisters weeping for those who had returned from the camps, or who were never to return. They would be dispersed by the SP.

"Voluntary civic service" on behalf of the Community had long since lost whatever appeal it had once had for the men who swelled its ranks. It was arduous work, physically and morally draining work. Those who fit the category of the intelligentsia were ensconced in desk jobs at headquarters or in the district stations; the rest did beat duty on the streets. The patrols set up for the purpose of harassing street-vendors were reserved by the shopkeepers for themselves. [Otherwise, the patrolmen's duties included] catching draftees for the camps; manning the checkpoints, where they were responsible for maintaining order and dispersing the idle and the curious; standing guard at the <walls>, where they risked their lives to prevent anyone from climbing over or under; and, lastly, apprehending pedestrians who failed to make it home by curfew-time. The service was supposed to be voluntary: every officer had put his name to a document stating as much when he was hired. But each man

signed in the conviction that the war would soon come to an end, or that the Community would find the money to pay salaries to those who did its dirty work. But the war did not end. The work was exhausting and took up most of the day, or most of the night. At the end of his shift, no one had any strength left to look for a second job or another source of income. The only way out was to find a means of making money while on the job. It was a deplorable and disgusting form of income, but what other choice did they have?

/92/ There were various ways to make money. Let us start at the top: Colonel Szeryński received a salary of 600 zlotys.

The governing board of the SP<?> decided to set up its own fund. The Community magnanimously gave its assent. Hence there was created, within the SP, an organization by the name of Sepor. District Commander Kroszczor was named director of Sepor, with Lieutenant Commander Czackis as his deputy. A tax was imposed on bakeries, to be paid in an equivalent amount of bread; all major firms, workshops and stores, as well as all individual residents of the ghetto, were to pay 30 grosze a month. Each district appointed the required number of tax-collectors from among its staff. The money started pouring in, destined for the men at the top. The administration of Sepor made the decision to distribute the money as soon as the total reached 100,000 zlotys. However, during the first month only 60,000 zlotys came in,

so they waited for additional revenue. Meanwhile the management incurred various administrative expenses, had to pay salaries under the table to higher-ups in need of money, and so on. Out of the 60,000 zlotys only 20,000 remained. Another 30,000 zlotys were collected, bringing the total to 50,000. Having learned from experience how quickly the money disappeared, they proceeded to divide up the funds. Each officer in the lower grades (from one to three buttons) received as his first allotment an amount ranging from 80 to 115 zlotys; district lieutenant commanders and commanders received larger allotments according to their rank. In addition, each officer was allotted approximated six kilos of bread a month. Later allotments came to roughly the same amounts, and were paid out at intervals of a few months. Sepor was a gold mine -- for the top brass.

The war dragged on; the work was exhausting and it consumed the better part of the day. His savings long since used up, more than one policeman descended to the level of a petty thief. Having no time to supplement their income after hours, the officers had no alternative but to supplement it while on duty. The money earned in this fashion was paltry and repugnant, but there was nothing else they could do. There were various ways to make it. There was the small band of sharp operators who let cartloads of goods into the ghetto with the collusion of a corrupt gendarme. They made good money, but often risked their entire capital on a single transaction. There were several dozen of these scam-artists.

Then there was a privileged group of no-shows who paid their commanding officers an agreed amount to avoid having to report for duty; the latter in turn would take care of the district commanders. In the ledgers of the SP these officers would be assigned to fictitious guard posts or detached for "special" assignments not subject to internal SP controls /93/ or to the frequent inspection-tours of the gendarmerie.

The Jewish policemen standing guard duty at the checkpoints received small bribes in turn from the officers who were engaged in smuggling. They could also make money by letting Jews cross over to the Aryan side, or Aryans enter the ghetto -- after giving the gendarme his cut, of course. In addition, the gendarmes occasionally handed out the bread they confiscated from returning site-workers to the Jewish policemen. Along the walls, where the posts were manned singly or by several officers, they would charge a fee by the sack -- or by the head -- for each little child allowed to climb over or sneak under the wall. The smugglers paid from 50 grosze to a zloty per sack, although they themselves earned several hundred zlotys a sack. The difference between duty at the checkpoints and duty along the walls was like night and day. At the checkpoints the money was better and the risk minimal, since all the responsibility rested on the gendarmes. Along the walls the money was lousy and the policemen on duty had to bear the entire risk themselves: whenever a German patrol showed up, the smugglers would scatter, leaving the Jewish policemen stuck at their posts.

often they would be beaten bloody or sent off to a concentration-camp. Or they would take a bullet in the head on the spot.

The street patrolmen adopted the time-honored practice of police all over the world. They collected payments from shopkeepers, bakeries and other small businesses on their beats. The beat patrolmen had to turn over 20% of the take to his superiors. Platoon commanders got 20% of what the patrolmen on guard duty made; half of this amount went to the deputy district commander, and so on up the chain of command. The commanders incurred no risk whatsoever. The regulations were crystal clear: the SP patrolman's duty was to guard the wall, and failure to do so was punishable by <death>. And [yet] he risked his life to pick up a few grosze. Aside from the few dozen operators at the checkpoints and some district commanders, the Jewish policemen did not make much, despite rumors to the contrary. The patrolmen <?> their posts at the walls out of fear, and the uninitiated observer would see only that smuggling was taking place. In broad daylight sacks, cans of milk and even live poultry would be passed over the wall, and our observer would see the officer taking a bribe. How much he received was immaterial -- it must be worth it to him, because he accepted it and let the goods through. Yet this was not true. The patrolman allowed the smuggling to go on not because of the bribe (50 grosze a sack); nor was he prompted to do so by his social conscience, telling him to let as much food as possible into the ghetto.

He permitted the smuggling to go on because he had to. Why? This is [perhaps] best explained by an incident that involved Traube shortly before the Artists' Garden opened its doors.

His platoon commander assigned Julian to duty along the wall on Rymarska Street. The wall ran between the Melody Palace cafe and the half-demolished building of the [former] Ministry of Industry and Trade.

"Squad leader Traube," the commander said, "since this is your first time on this assignment, I am giving you an extra man. Are you familiar with your instructions?"

"Yes, sir."

The five men marched off. It was 1:35 PM. They relieved the previous watch. Julian stationed two patrolmen by the wall and went with the other two into the cafe, from which he could keep an eye on the street and <?>. At first the two men thought that Julian was inviting them to join him in a cup of coffee. But when he explained that they were to be the second shift, and that they would go on duty in one <?>, they burst out laughing and exclaimed simultaneously: "But, sir, how are they going to manage without us?" Seeing the look of surprise on their commanding officer's face, they went on: "Two stand guard while the other two count the bags and collect the money."

Julian was shocked by such brazen <?>

The end of the second book <*sic!*>

SAMUEL PUTERMAN

The prison for Jews was housed in a former wing of the military prison on Geŝia Street. Before the war there were eighteen cells, intended for one hundred inmates. After it was enlarged, the prison was reckoned able to accommodate 200 prisoners. It acquired the name "Central Detention" of the Jewish Council of Warsaw. The SP was put in charge of the prison. Judge Lindenfeld was appointed director, with Lieutenant Commander Rudniański<?> as his deputy; twenty-six petty officers of the SP were designated as prison-guards. The guard staff of the women's wing of the prison was placed under the supervision of Mrs. Lederman, the wife of the commander of District V. She was given the title of lieutenant commander and [a staff of] twenty women, who received the rank of squad leader and the right to wear police armbands and caps. The women squad leaders were assigned to additional duties at the checkpoints, where they conducted searches of women who worked for German enterprises.

The prison-cells were filled by the Germans <with:> Jews caught on the Aryan side and guilty of the crime of leaving the Jewish Quarter with a <valid> pass but with goods carried out past the guards, which was forbidden. These were the so-called "legal" detainees. Other Jews were taken into custody on the Aryan side for not wearing their armbands, which was likewise prohibited. The few who possessed passes followed this practice without exception, inasmuch as it was

impossible to carry on any sort of business with Polish firms while wearing an armband. A second category of criminals comprised minors, the little smugglers who were caught on the Aryan side. A third category was that of adult men and women guilty of leaving the Jewish Quarter illegally -- without a pass. Finally, the last category (and an insignificant one at that) consisted of true criminals: pickpockets and store-burglars. /2/ All of the lawbreakers were transferred by the Germans and the precinct-stations of the Polish Police over the course of two days. They had not been sentenced; they were transported from Polish prisons and preliminary-detention centers without knowing how long they were to be held in the Jewish prison, nor what fate awaited them.

Towards the end of 1941, the German authorities decided to launch a vigorous campaign against the typhus epidemic. The Health Department received a new set of director superiors: the "Ober-fumigators" Baukman and Kautsch from the German Army, the fumigation specialist Braun and two Polish police officers -- *Volksdeutsche* -- Corporal Pejczel and <pln.??> Kreczmar. The chief medical officer was Dr. Kubliński; designated as commissioner in charge of the campaign against the epidemic in the Jewish Quarter was Major Ganc Meches,³ who had been a doctor before the outbreak of the war. Colonel Kohn, a doctor, remained as head of the Health Department. At their first meeting, a motion by Major

³ Presumably, Dr. Tadeusz Ganc, a former major in the Polish army medical corps. See Czerniakow, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow* (New York, Stein and Day, 1982), p. 277, note 10.

Ganc to disinfect [certain] districts was approved. They would <start> with those districts where the threat was greatest, that is, the block of dwellings enclosed by Ciepła, Krochmalna and Rynkowa streets. This was to be a trial run, which, if it proved successful, might lead to the extension of the procedure to cover the entire Jewish Quarter. The whole plan of the operation was kept strictly secret. The administration of the SP was ordered to have 300 officers ready -- fifty from each district -- at 3:30 in the morning. Lieutenant Commander Lejkin, who was employed for special assignments, was directed to assemble the men and lead them to the designated points. At 4 AM a German car stopped in front of SP headquarters and Braun got out, accompanied by the *Ober-fumigators* and some Polish police officers. The SP force marched to Grzybowska Street; meanwhile three platoons of Polish policemen /3/ and fifty gendarmes arrived. The entrances to Ciepła, Grzybowska and Rynkowa were blocked off. Krochmalna, Czysta and Rysztowa <?Rynkowa?> streets -- the habitat of poverty before the war; the haunt of tawdry prostitutes; the hide-out of thieves -- awoke to the sound of gunfire and the shouting of hundreds of SP officers. "Everyone downstairs!" Panic. "Take nothing with you! You will return to your apartments." They did not believe it. Deportation... to death...

Torn from sleep, they had no idea what to do. Young people hid in cellars and attics, or fled to the rooftops. But the block of buildings was cordoned off on all sides.

The SP men drove them from their apartments. Their orders were to leave no one behind. The healthy were required to carry the sick. The dirty narrow streets filled up with a throng of terrified people. <The poor came out into the street for the first time **pojedynczo**.> A whole wave [of them] emerged -- unkempt, dirty and ragged; they were detained, trembling, in small groups. They were driven [by means of] rifle-butts, shouts and gunshots to the Market Square, the former site of the Wielopole market-stalls. The healthy bore the sick wrapped hastily in a bed sheet, a tablecloth or a dress. <The hovels of the poor> spewed forth an endless [flood] of new people, frightened and in rags -- thousands of rags. Paralytics crept along the muddy pavement, with the elderly sick and children, who had young [but] extinguished eyes and the faces of old men and women. The eyes of the sick were burning, consumed with typhus fever. Hundreds of lips whispered words of prayer; thousands of moans merged into a sound resembling the howling of a gale; and above all of this could be heard the frantic shouting of the gendarmes, the SP and the [Polish] police. Loudest of all was *Ober-fumigator* Baukman. His voice dominated this dismal orchestra. For the first half-hour he swung his rifle-butt and revolver, and then resorted to flailing with his enormous arms. He was everywhere: in the attics, in the cellars, on the rooftops; he would [return] to the street, only to dash back into some apartment or other, /4/ from which he would drag some unfortunate and hurl him

down the stairs. He was enraged by the passivity of each victim he assaulted. His eyes were bloodshot -- he resembled an adipose fish gasping for air. He went back out onto the street, and paused a moment in astonishment at the spectacle [that greeted his eyes] on Krochmalna. Several hundred invalids trudged along clinging to the walls of the buildings or pushing their wheelchairs before them as they headed towards the end of the street. The rest crawled along the cobblestones; covered with bits of trash, they glistened from the mud in the street. [Baukman] kicked a paralytic who was propelling himself forward by means of jerky movements with his arms and legs. The human rag tottered a few meters and fell down flat like a scrap of wet cloth. The Ober-fumigator glanced around in search of a new victim. Spotting a Jewish policeman who was staring at the street as if in a trance, he pounced on him and gave him a few swift punches. He caught a second and a third officer; he beat them until they were bloody. Though he was out of breath, he heaved a sigh of relief. The beaten officers had not fallen down, but had remained standing firmly on their feet. On the Market Square, Major Ganc was issuing orders, while Lejkin attempted, with the assistance of several dozen policemen, to separate the sick from the healthy. Neither force nor persuasion were of any use: there was no way to control the crowd. Mothers were calling out to their lost little ones; sobbing children searched for their parents. In the midst of the misfortune that had overtaken these people like a

thunderclap during their sleep, each family tried to draw in tightly together. They made the sick sit upright, so as to appear well; they covered their feverish little children with their coats. They thought they were on their way to their deaths or to expulsion. Dr. Syrkin-Birsteinowa, the representative of the Social Welfare Bureau, tried in vain to explain [the situation], calling out to them: "Do not interfere with our work! We are conducting an operation for your benefit! You will go to the baths, and all of you will return to your apartments this very day. The sick will be treated in the hospital." They did not believe [her].

The crowd, ten thousand strong, /5/ huddled close together forming a single indivisible mass. The gendarmes could do nothing -- nor could Baukman, who advanced menacingly on the throng. The outer rows retreated a step, and the crowd parted to make way for the dreaded sadist. Baukman set his arms in motion, delivered a couple of punches, and withdrew in disgust. In a brief conference, Major Ganc, Baukman, Dr. Syrtin-Birsteinowa and Lejkin decided to carry out the selections at the baths. Several dozen policemen went into town to commandeer wagons for the sick and elderly. The rest were escorted in groups of a few hundred persons each to the baths. Meanwhile Polish disinfection units placed fumigators in the worst-contaminated apartments, to which they carried things such as clothing and bed linens from the remaining apartments. The other contaminated apartments were disinfected with lysol.

The SP's assignment was to guard the apartments against any possible intruders who might have concealed themselves in the recesses of the buildings. The disinfection units were to complete their task in half a day, and the residents were all supposed to get baths by the end of the day. These projections turned out to be erroneous. The system organized for the clean-up operation proved inadequate. Groups returning from the baths were unable to return to their apartments. Chilled to the bone and lightly dressed, they were obliged to go back to the square, which was cordoned off by the SP. The operation last two days. <Pinhule's?> carts removed 286 bodies. After their baths, the residents of Krochmalna, Ciepła and Rynkowa streets found half of their belongings stolen by the handful of their fellow tenants who had managed to hide, or by the Polish disinfection units, the gendarmes <z wartościovych drobnostek> and the SP. Yet the lice -- the inseparable companions of poverty -- remained as before.

/6/ The experiment had been a failure. The Health Department saw that it had to come up with a different system. With Dr. Kubliński's assent, it was decided to enlarge the staff of doctors and medical assistants. The doctors were given the assignment of inspecting the sanitary conditions in residential buildings. They were to compile a list of unregistered cases [of typhus] that could not be properly treated at home. [The residents of] such buildings would be subject to compulsory baths, to which they would be

escorted by the SP. With this aim in mind, a [new] organization was brought into existence: the <Anti->Epidemic Company, or "Pepid" for short. Here, as in every newly established institution, the organizers were guided by civic-minded impulses. In hiring doctors, the Health Department checked their reputations; the medical assistants and administrative staff of the Department were likewise individuals with solid references. The director of the SP, Szeryński, received instructions from the president of the Jewish Council to place twenty-five officers at the disposal of the Health Department. The commanders of the individual SP districts were instructed to supply section and squad leaders of good repute. Deputy commander Mieczysław Szmerling, who had heretofore served in the inspectorate of the SP, was named director of the Anti-Epidemic Company. Before the war Szmerling had headed a modest-sized construction firm. He was thirty-five years old and looked forty-six; of enormous height, he had legs as massive as columns. He had a propensity to go unshaved. As a member of the SP he wore a mustache and was dubbed King Kong. He was a very capable organizer and an exacting taskmaster. An unpleasant man -- yet his subordinates liked him because he took care of his people and spared no efforts on their behalf. He reorganized the Health Department, which together with "Pepid" leased the former quarters of the Polish Ambulance Service at No. 56 Leszno Avenue. A new work procedure was devised: the medical inspectors notified the

Department as to which apartment buildings required fumigation. The Department /7/ relayed six to ten addresses to the director of "Pepid" each day at 4:30 AM. Szmerling would [then] despatch twelve to fifteen officers commanded by a squad leader to the designated buildings. The squad's assignment was to get the gate-key from the porter and to let no one leave before the arrival of the doctor and the disinfection unit. Guards were to be posted at all of the exits as a precaution. At <8> AM, the doctor would arrive to select the apartments to be fumigated. He would designate the apartments in which the disinfection units had to set up fumigators. The SP squad leader would identify those apartments not needing fumigation.

The Health Department's new procedure looked splendid on paper. The health inspectors reported those buildings where fumigation and baths were called for. At the direction of the Department, the SP would seal off the designated building by 5 AM. No one was allowed out before the doctor arrived with the disinfection unit. [They] would appear at 8 AM. The doctor's duty was to divide the apartments into [three] categories: those that required [general] disinfection, those where the disinfection units would have to set up fumigators, and those where disinfection and baths were not necessary, as for example, those that were clean and that contained a bathroom. At 10 AM the doctor was to turn over to the SP squad leader a list of those residents whom his men were to escort to the baths. After the disinfection and

baths were completed, the doctor would lift the blockade around the building. The procedure was simple and straightforward and, one might have thought, it offered no opportunity for abuses. Enforcement of the law was in the hands of three persons: the doctor, the commander of the disinfection unit and the squad leader of the SP. The doctor was to be kept from temptation by the Hippocratic Oath and his salary as an officer of the Health Department; the commander of the disinfection unit had his service reputation [to consider], as well as the salary every official received; /8/ while the SP squad leader had only his good name [to inhibit him]. From the very start reality and theory were far apart. The SP squad would descend on the designated apartment house, terrifying the residents with whistle-blasts and shouts of "Everyone downstairs!" Roused from their sleep, the residents would come down in a crowd and lay siege to the two officers at the gate, one of whom would receive the money and the other would let them out onto the street. The wealthier residents escaped having to go to the compulsory baths; there was nothing pleasurable about marching in a dense column down the middle of the street under a police escort. At 8 AM the doctor would appear and make a tour of the apartments along with a police officer assigned to accompany him. The doctor assigned [the apartments] to categories according to the size of the bribe the SP officer collected for him; they split it, with 40% going to the policeman and 60% to the doctor. The commander

of the disinfection unit had the broadest scope for bribe-taking. His instructions stated that in apartments subject to disinfection all of the clothes and bedding were to be gathered up and placed in the fumigator. They would come out of the fumigator half-scorched and full of holes from the gas. For each item of value -- a coat, a suit or a quilt -- that was exempted [from this procedure], payment of several hundred zlotys was extorted. After the cleansing operation was completed, the building would echo with the lamentations of the residents, whose last grosz had been squeezed out of them and whose belongings had been ruined. The air was filled with the coughing of those residents who had caught cold in the poorly heated bathhouses. To the baths went the poorest of the poor, scantily clad and often shoeless.

The new institution had failed the test, <jak zreszta ta instytucja w ghecie -?->. The Warsaw ghetto, the largest congregation of Jews in Europe, had failed the test. The Łódź ghetto, where Rumkowski ruled with an iron hand, was held up as a model of good organization. In Łódź there were no rich and poor, no loafers and workers. In Łódź everyone worked, and everything they produced went to the Germans. /9/ The allocation of food was carried out in a just manner. No one smuggled anything into the ghetto; it was impossible to obtain anything on the open market. Rumkowski personally directed the seizure of concealed merchandise, large sums of cash, gold and jewelry, which he would sell to the Łódź Gestapo in exchange for foodstuffs. The *Judenrat* in Radom

possessed the knack of buying the Germans off. They paid heavy fines to get [the Germans] to call off a labor-draft, a reduction in the size of the ghetto or the expulsion of a segment of the populace. The leaders of the Warsaw ghetto, Czerniaków and his closest associates -- a small band of men of good will -- made superhuman efforts to stem the corruption and arbitrariness that were rife on all sides. But what were they to do with an official who was enriching himself dishonestly and who had "his own" German? Was it possible to remove such a one as Inspector Hendel of the SP, who schemed with the Germans to shrink the ghetto by one street, Sienna, and [then] played the hero by "taking care" of the matter for two kilos of gold collected from the residents of the threatened street? Was it possible to call to account the director of a labor-camp who sold off several hundred pairs of shoes intended for the laborers, when he split the take with the Germans? Adam Czerniaków's fine words, spoken before the assembled functionaries, were to no avail, as were the speeches of engineer Sztolcman. Battening on the sickly and impoverished organism of the Warsaw ghetto were the Council's defective administration and public services, a pleiade of younger Jews in the employ of the Gestapo and, finally, "No. 13," the Office for Combating Usury, whose officers battled usury by exacting a payoff for each dishonest weight they seized. They fought smuggling by extorting a king's ransom from /10/ the wholesalers who handled the so-called major consignments; they [also]

extracted payment from the proprietors of illegal bakeries, flour-mills and many similar illegal enterprises, on which a multitude of Jews bereft of other ways to make money depended for a living. The stiff tribute collected by "No. 13" was felt most of all by the consumers, who had to cover the increased cost of production. The management of "No. 13" did not share in the take of their subordinates; Szternfeld, Gancwajch and their closest associates, such as Dr. Sztater, <?>aner Mendel and attorney Lewin, raked in profits from other schemes. From informers they received a stream of reports about concealed merchandise and buried gold; youthful snitches who had no pass to the Aryan side or access to Szucha Avenue, passed their information to Szternfeld or his minions. The Germans would take the matter from there, sharing the proceeds generously with their agents. From the inception of "No. 13," its rank-and-file officers had been at odds with the SP. The accusations hurled at the SP, when set alongside their voluntary and onerous work, were disproportionate to the services they rendered to the community. Fair-minded people unanimously acknowledged that it was thanks only to the SP that enormous quantities of food made it into the ghetto. As for the fact that the SP rounded up Jews for the labor-camps, that was, if anything, the bright side of this dismal procedure. The labor-camps had been created by the German authorities. If the Germans had had to get the people, the levies would no doubt have been far more brutal. The officers of the SP took bribes, it is

true, but for these handfuls of grosze they risked their lives. There were no instances of extortion on the part of the Jewish police, in contrast to the officers of "No. 13," who resorted to all manner of blackmail in every aspect of their work. The power of "No. 13"'s leaders grew with each passing day. Szternfeld and Gancwajch already had ample money from their various rackets; now they craved respect and authority. They divided /11/ the labor of conquest between themselves. Szternfeld was to fight to achieve power, while Gancwajch campaigned to win over public opinion. Szternfeld began by taking on the SP. He sent a handwritten letter to the head of the SP with the demand that the men of the SP salute officers of "No. 13." The letter wound up in the waste-basket, but when, a week later, Szternfeld seized two officers of the SP on the street -- one of whom he had sent, with the help of his patrons, to Auschwitz for resisting arrest -- the director of the SP saw that he had no choice but to invite the representatives of "No. 13" to a parley. The head of "13," accompanied by Mendel and attorney Lewin, was greeted by Colonel Szeryński, District Commander Czapliński and Lieutenant Commander Lejkin. At the end of an hour-long conference it was agreed that lower-ranking members of the SP would be required to salute "officers" of "13." Szternfeld's next move was an abortive attempt to take over the Council President's chair. One morning a German police car stopped in front of the Council building on Grzybowska. Three Gestapo officers got out, went into Czerniaków's office

and, without so much as a word of explanation, lashed him with their riding-whips and dragged him from the room. They pushed him down the stairs, shoved him half-unconscious into the car, and drove him away to some unknown destination. Besides themselves with fear, the councilmen got in touch with Szucha Avenue. Panic broke out in the city. Fantastic rumors and hypotheses began to circulate by word of mouth. After two days the president was returned, severely beaten, to his official post. Rumor had it that the Germans had apologized to Czerniaków for the mistake.

The campaign launched by Gancwajch was more successful. Posters went up around town announcing a grand performance, to take place in the Melody Palace with the participation of prominent stage-artists. All the proceeds were to go to /12/ the poor under the patronage of Madame Gancwajch.

Every day in front of the building at No. 13 Leszno, throngs of poor Jews could be seen, to whom a specially created committee dispensed soup or tea with a hunk of bread.

Moryc [Kohn] likewise did not let up in his efforts to garner public opinion. He donated enormous sums, which he handed over to the rabbis, for the yeshivas, and he supported an orphanage, in return for which he received letters of thanks that he diligently collected and saved. He arranged the release from their dungeon-cells of Jews who did not have the money to buy their way out. These outlays were covered by wealthy Jews who found themselves in similar straits. The money poured into the coffers of Kohn & Heller. Besides the

deals and the income that only a few of his associates knew about, Kohn's legitimate ventures brought him huge returns. The firm, which bought up all sorts of goods produced in the ghetto, was coming along splendidly. Moryc Kohn was on his way to becoming the Napoleon of commerce. Kohn enlarged his warehouse again, opened a new wholesale office at No. 15 Leszno, and launched a commercial arcade at No. 46 Leszno designed to accommodate a hundred stalls for food vendors. Moryc Kohn constructed horse-drawn streetcars to link the little ghetto with the main one. Moryc Kohn brought Jews from the Łódź ghetto to Warsaw. Among them were all of his relatives: his mother, two sisters, three brothers, two sisters-in-law, and a brother-in-law. Within a day he found places to live for all of them, and opened a factory producing honey and sweets, which he presented to his married sister. He took in the rest of his family at his newly furnished apartment at No. 3 Orła. He had bought new furniture, paintings, sofas and statuary. Anyone in the ghetto with anything of value to sell offered it to Kohn, or to an intermediary who dealt with the firm of Kohn & Heller.

Almost every village or small town has its lunatic, its crazy Josek or Wojtek the fool.

The Warsaw ghetto had Rubinsztejn. Rubinsztejn was an army madman. Captured by the Germans and sent to do hard labor at the start of the war, he was beaten and went out of his mind. He turned into the cheerful sort of lunatic. All day long he ran about town and no matter what part of the

ghetto his stumpy little figure appeared in, a crowd would gather. His sayings were repeated by everyone in the ghetto. When the Jews were forced to put on armbands, Rubinsztejn showed off his own and shouted: "*Ale glach!* I wear an armband, and Czerniaków wears an armband. Pinkiert wears an armband, and I wear one. *Ale glach!*" "*Ale glach!*" he would shout as the Germans were rounding men up for the labor-camps.

"Rubinsztejn! Who's going to survive the war?"

"Fifty-five," he would reply without hesitation.

"<Cal -?->, why fifty-five?" asked the crowd of loafers who surrounded him.

With a serious expression he counted them off: "Twenty-six -- that's the Jewish Council; the *Überwachungsstelle*/No. 13 makes thirty-nine; Kohn & Heller on Leszno Avenue brings it to fifty-three; I'm fifty-four and Pinkiert is fifty-five."

"What about the rest?"

"*Ale glach!*" He pointed to the ground. "So there," he exclaimed triumphantly. "I'm a wise madman." And he ran off across town.

Ale glach would jump on board hackney-cabs -- the drivers would seat him next to themselves on the box -- and the passengers would become the targets of his barbs. Rubinsztejn had a written safe-conduct pass giving him blanket immunity. He was not rounded up to work at the labor-sites or the camps. He was known to the gendarmes at

the checkpoints, the SP and many ordinary pedestrians. He had entrée to popular and expensive restaurants, where the diners stood him vodka and gave him meals. He had nowhere to live, yet he thrived. "By myself I make more than all those corpses put together," he boasted, indicating the beggars lined up along the walls of apartment buildings. A wise madman.

/14/ At the end of December, 1941, the Germans began to clear Jews from small villages and towns. Those who were expelled were transported or driven on foot to Warsaw. This impoverished small-town Jewry had become virtually rooted to the earth together with their squalid hovels. Indeed, they lived from one day to the next; the daily struggle to get food absorbed all their energies. In the places of their birth they somehow managed to cope. Resettlement in Warsaw was a death-sentence: they were like plants transplanted to the wrong kind of soil. The Council settled them in places where death continuously made room for others. New shelters were set up in the vacant buildings of old cinemas and schools. The poor who were housed in residential buildings fared much better than those who resided in self-contained units or in separate buildings altogether. The difference was that the latter were looked after exclusively by the Social Welfare Department acting in the name of the Jewish Council; its funds and food allotment were far from sufficient to meet basic needs. The residents of shelters located in apartment buildings, on the other hand, benefited

from the supplementary assistance provided by the House Committees. The House Committees were a bright page in [the history of] the Warsaw ghetto. They sprang up almost spontaneously, and there was not a single apartment building in the ghetto that did not have such a self-governing unit. The House Committees consisted of a board of directors and a chairman, that is, of a few to a few dozen members depending on the number of residents in the given house. The purpose of each House Committee was to assist the poorest tenants in the building. If the apartment house was occupied by very well-off Jews, with only a small percentage <of poor residents>, the surplus funds would go to neighboring houses, primarily those that had a relief-shelter or that were burdened with an inordinately high percentage of poor residents.

/15/ The House Committees raised money by organizing social events such as dances or all-night parties, to which they invited the residents of neighboring buildings and their acquaintances. Every well-to-do apartment building had its club room where the residents gathered each evening after the beginning of curfew. The club rooms were set up in the empty store-fronts of the building, or in apartments rented by the House Committee from less well-off tenants. The club rooms served a variety of purposes. They provided a place for the House Committee's meetings; they distributed free soup to those of limited means; in the evening, they were the site of card-games, from which the Committee exacted a hefty

contribution -- the buffet, too, produced income. The House Committees exhibited great selflessness; equally great was the implacability of their demands for donations -- either on a regular basis or in a lump-sum -- from the wealthy residents. In this regard they had an easy task since, as the saying goes, you can't hide anything from the neighbors. In the entrance-way to each apartment building there hung a board with the inscription: "Blacklist of Residents" -- those who had failed to meet their obligation towards their fellow residents. In most cases, the columns were blank. Woe, however, to the stubborn tenant who wound up on the blacklist. The very first time this happened, the disinfection unit would show up. When the holdout was identified to the SP squad leader, he would be compelled to go to the public baths with his entire family, regardless of whether or not the apartment needed disinfecting; their belongings would be fumigated. As a rule, though, the individual faced with such an alternative would make up all the arrears and promise to mend his ways in the future. Apartment buildings that contained relief-shelters bore a double burden: excessive financial strain and frequent disinfections, inasmuch as most of the typhus cases were recorded in the shelters. (Health Department regulations required that each building in which typhus was discovered be scrubbed with disinfectants and fumigated.)

/16/ The mortality rate hit 7,000 a month in December. Yet <sic!> there were whole districts where the House

Committees played a purely representative role, where the chairman and the board were simultaneously elected to represent the house [in its dealings with] the district. These were houses for which the assistance of their neighbors was but a drop in the bucket -- whose residents were condemned to a slow death by starvation.

In December the mortality rate hit 6,000 a month <sic!>. Pinkiert's carts hauled more than a hundred bodies off the streets of the ghetto each month. Each morning SP patrols would file reports on the corpses they encountered in their precincts. The residents of the poorer buildings would toss bodies out onto the streets. In this manner indigent relatives saved themselves the expense of burial -- 20 zlotys, collected by the Jewish Council -- and got to keep the set of rags that the deceased was wearing. Each night the gates of these poor tenements would open, and the relatives [of the dead] would carry the bodies into the street and place them against the walls of the adjoining houses. A solicitous hand would cover the body with brown paper; another hand, trembling, would weight the paper down with a piece of brick. They would bid an affectionate farewell to the deceased, with a sigh of relief -- or was it despair? Rarely did they weep. Dead children were cast into the street in a different manner. Moryc Kohn was returning home from an all-night drinking binge with two Gestapo officers. The previous day a new venture of his had turned out to be a success. He had invited the Germans to drink

with him at a dance-hall in the cellar of the Hotel Bristol. Pretty waitresses served them expensive cognac. They left together at five in the morning. The Germans had a car waiting for them, but decided to walk part of the way. The car rolled along slowly behind them. Moryc Kohn and Zysze Heller were cracking jokes; the Germans chatted. The merry foursome made their way to <Lubecki Street?>. Bodies lay at the foot of every wall -- naked, covered with yellow skin. "Was ist das?" they inquired. "Corpses!" replied Kohn to the Germans. "And those bundles -- what are those bundles lying there wrapped up in rags?" "Those are the bodies /17/ of infants. That's the kind of burial that caring mothers arrange." The only response of the Germans was to get off the street they had so carelessly wandered down, bid a hasty good-night and get into their car. The mood after the pleasant drinking-party had been spoiled for them.

Moryc Kohn's wife gave birth to a son. To mark the occasion, colorful posters went up on the walls of the ghetto. Under Kohn's sponsorship, a children's show was set to take place in the Melody Palace, with the participation of the most talented performers. It was called "From Little Kohn to His Poor Little Brothers"; all the proceeds were to be set aside for poor children. Although it was a big hit, the show posted a loss. Moryc kicked in an additional 5,000 zlotys -- the amount he charged to bring a single person from Łódź to the Warsaw ghetto.

On December 15, 1941, in District I of the SP, at 3:25 PM, the duty officer, Kac, took down the report of the director of the relief-shelter at No. 53 Śliska, where an incident of cannibalism had come to light. The district commander, Judge Pecznik, sent his deputy together with three officers to investigate the matter on the spot. Chana Borensztejn's eight-month-old infant, a girl, had died. The mother had cut off one of the child's legs, roasted it in the courtyard and eaten it. Chana Borensztejn was placed under arrest. She was set free after the doctors declared that she posed no threat to the community.

In regard to the section concerning the deportees from the cities and towns of the Warsaw District: the exiles brought with them as much of their property as they could carry on their backs, the dismal waft of penury, and despair over their lost loved ones, who had perished along the way from the cold, the beatings or the bullets of the Germans. The refugees gave fantastic accounts of mass murders, executions and death in gas-chambers. These latter modes of annihilation of the Jews were greeted with smiles of incredulity in Warsaw. /18/ This, even though the bearer of the tale was, to all appearances, often reliable.

The ghetto [had entered] a period of stability, and a certain part of the population lived better and better. A

dozen or more workshops had opened for business: small machine-shops, brushmaker's shops, and craft studios. Working through the *Transferstelle*, the Germans supplied the ghetto with raw materials at fixed prices and received finished goods in return. The most highly developed industry was that of brush-making, which employed a steadily increasing number of workers. Major customers were the firm of Kohn & Heller, for articles manufactured from pre-war materials; Welek Szymonowicz, a rising star at "No. 13," for steel products; and attorney Lewin, one of the pillars of "No. 13," for wooden articles.

At this time, the population of the ghetto could be divided into three classes. The first class comprised the new breed of manufacturers, who were thriving. The Germans paid [them] well; moreover, they were free to resell leftover raw materials, supplied by the Germans at fixed prices, for a hundred times over cost. The second class was that of Jews living off of ready cash or the sale of their personal possessions. They eked out their lives from day to day, yearning for an end to the war. They were incapable of adapting to the new social conditions. And then there was the third class, at which everyone -- from JOINT, the Council and the Social Welfare Department on down to the man in the street -- waved his hand in a gesture that said, "These are beyond help; nothing can save them at this point." Unfortunately, this third category amounted to more than one-third of the total. For the last group, the Central Office

of the Jewish Cemetery on Okopowa acquired some additional tracts where communal graves were constantly being dug. There was such a striking contrast [among the three classes] in mode of living, clothes and outward appearance that even those who were the envy of the rest were shocked. /19/ The display windows of the grocery stores were crammed with gourmet items, and boasted cakes and pastries, sardines and grapes, and the highest-quality kielbasa. The buffets of bars and restaurants looked no worse than they did before the war, and were crowded with customers -- while hungry mobs stood before the entrances. This startling contrast was evident to every passing shopper, to the Jewish Council and, worst of all, to the German authorities, who -- making reference to the store windows crowded with well-dressed Jews, the restaurants, theaters and cafes -- repeatedly rejected the Council's pleas for an increase in food deliveries and the release of a portion of its frozen pre-war assets. The ordinances promulgated by the district commanders of the SP were ineffectual, as were the specially assigned police patrols, whom the shopkeepers plied with pastries. The fine would be paid, and an hour later the luxury items would reappear in the shop windows.

Did the shop owners fail to realize that they were doing harm to the community and to themselves? They knew that what they were doing was harmful, but, after all, they paid their taxes, and in the columns of their ledger-books they recorded the sales figures for grapes, oranges and canned goods, out

of which they paid their income and sales taxes <a **wszak P** - ?->. The Fiscal Department was monitored by the German authorities... And yet this behavior had tragic consequences.

More effective were the sweeps conducted by "No. 13," which sent its men around from time to time. The officers of "No. 13" would deal with the shopkeepers in uncompromising terms, German-style. They simply commandeered the merchandise and loaded it onto carts; either the owner went down to the "office" and ransomed his wares, or the foodstuffs ended up being divided among the officials in charge of combating poverty. This aspect of its work was carried out by "No. 13" on its own initiative, inasmuch as no one had asked it to do so, neither the Jewish Council, to which /20/ it was after all subordinate, nor the German authorities, who were indifferent. Fortunately, the downfall of "No. 13" was imminent.

The Germans were unable to cope with the smuggling, which went on across the walls, by way of small passages cut in the walls of apartments that adjoined Aryan dwellings, and via the checkpoints. Although they were individually searched, site-workers managed to smuggle in smaller amounts of foodstuffs that made up in quality what they lacked in quantity. The Germans made the SP, which had guards at all of the official checkpoints, answerable for the contraband trade. In reply to the [Germans'] reproaches, the director of the SP naturally could not mention that the checkpoints

were guarded, in the first place, by the gendarmes, nor could he say that the walls were patrolled on the Aryan side by the Polish Police, nor again that the site-workers were none too carefully searched. He also could not bring up the contacts between adjoining Jewish and Aryan apartments, which took place in locations known only to the initiated.

The Warsaw District boss, Auerswald, was the official with overall responsibility for the Jewish Quarter there. Dressed in civilian clothes and wearing a Jewish armband, he personally made the rounds of the guard posts to get a firsthand look at the work of the Jewish Public-Order Service. As a result of these observations, the district stations of the SP posted orders from Polish Police headquarters reminding SP officers of the penalties for neglect of duty and prohibiting them from talking to the gendarmes. Henceforth, SP officers were to stand duty at a distance of twenty-five paces from the checkpoints; they were permitted to approach, at the behest of a gendarme, in order to receive instructions relating to the execution of his orders, [otherwise] they were to maintain the prescribed distance under all conditions. Twenty-five paces were supposed to ward off the destructive influence exerted by the SP on Adolf Hitler's army.

/21/ On December 8, 1941, America declared war on the Axis powers. The jubilation was universal: "Now we can congratulate ourselves," said Jews who knew a thing or two about politics -- "America won't have to fight more than

three or four months. With America in the war, it will be all over in a matter of weeks." The enthusiasm continued unabated, despite an edict from the Governor-General directing all *Judenräte* in the ghettos of the Government-General to confiscate [all] fur clothing in the possession of Jews. In the Warsaw ghetto, fur coats and other fur garments, scraps of fur and fur-lined gloves were to be turned in to the Council within three days. The penalty for hiding fur was death. For three days the ghetto took on a singular appearance: virtually every pedestrian was carrying a fur garment over one arm, or a parcel containing a fur. Someone who owned several furs would turn in one or two, and sell the rest for a pittance, or burn them. A few hours after the edict was posted, Poles began showing up in the ghetto to buy furs from the Jews. They would pay a few hundred zlotys for a fur worth tens of thousands. They took individual furs out of the ghetto on their own backs; larger quantities passed through the Courthouse<?> on Leszno Avenue, one part of which gave on the Aryan side and the other, which housed the Fiscal Bureau for Jews, was located in the ghetto. Furs also were transported across the walls by night. The fur confiscation went off painlessly by and large, if one <did not> take into account those who could have lived for a couple of months on the money a fur could bring, or those who would catch cold. All winter long Jews made a point of wearing the cloth collars and lapels that had been ripped out of fur garments. Following the confiscation of the furs

there were two further ones, of skis and men's ski boots. The deadlines and penalties for evasion were the same.

More painful was an edict reducing the size of the ghetto by a few streets /22/ -- and, moreover, forthwith. Within a couple of days the following streets were to be vacated: Ogrodowa beyond the intersection with Żelazna; the odd-numbered side of Żelazna; Chłodna beyond Żelazna; Krochmalna beyond Żelazna; and Sienna in the small ghetto. The Council pleaded for a postponement until spring, but to no avail. Equally unavailing were the pleas of the trade inspector, who had been authorized to speak on behalf of the Council. The deadline remained in force. The authorities would not agree even to a delay of a couple of days. For a week the ghetto assumed the -- by now familiar -- look of overloaded carts, from which pieces of furniture would fall to the pavement with a crash; and of baby carriages pushed by women and children, and filled with pots and pans, and other household items. The SP was mobilized; day and night they helped with the packing and loading. The SP officers haggled with the drivers, settled on prices, guarded property, and prodded the residents to hurry. They strained themselves to the utmost to clear the streets within the designated time-limit, because the Germans were threatening to shoot anyone they saw on the streets or in the buildings excluded from the ghetto after the deadline had passed.

The workers in the anti-epidemic campaign, whom the Health Department had excused from their duties for the week,

performed miracles. They worked efficiently and with total dedication. Rolling up their sleeves, they turned themselves into porters, helped with the packing, loaded the carts, and collared thieves. They carried the sick to the hospital. Thanks to the assistance and the generous labors of the SP, the Jewish Council met the deadline for handing over tens of thousands of keys to vacated Jewish apartments. Fifteen thousand Jews were left homeless. Part of them found rooms to rent; another part were housed with help from the Housing Allocation Department, which reserved rooms in under-used apartments at pre-war prices for the less well-off. About five thousand Jews ended up in relief shelters. /23/ The shelters quickly made space for the constant flow of new evacuees.

I should add that the Jewish Cemetery on Okopowa was now outside of the ghetto. The exclusion from the ghetto of only one side (even-numbered or odd-numbered) of the above-mentioned streets led to the erection of walls dividing them down the middle. The Council was ordered to set up temporary barriers of barbed wire along Żelazna in the main ghetto and along Sienna in the little ghetto. At the same time the Council was to begin building walls to take the place of the barbed-wire barricades. By spring the entire ghetto was to be enclosed within a uniform wall demarcating its boundaries. This plan seemed like an enormous undertaking, one impossible to carry out. Well-informed parties, and those who had unofficial contacts with the authorities, were unable to

state exactly why the ghetto was to be encompassed by a uniform wall. Fantastic rumors circulated, two of which were widely credited: that the wall was to be a line of defense for Warsaw, and that it was intended as a barrier to smuggling. The latter version gained greater currency following the execution of ten SP officers for abetting the traffic in contraband.

The ten officers received an innocent-looking summons to report to SP headquarters. They did not suspect a thing. Such summonses were sent out by the Disciplinary Bureau by the dozens each month. In all probability the Disciplinary Bureau likewise had no inkling as to why the Gestapo, which itself had furnished the officers' badge numbers, had ordered that they be called in. Only nine showed up; two SS officers were already present and waiting for them. The tenth did not appear. This was Herman Holzer, a Jew expelled from Germany in 1936. He had had the biggest hand in abetting the smugglers; he and some of the gendarmes had known each other since their school-days. /24/ They tipped him off to the danger threatening him. The nine officers were placed under arrest, and [the name of] a tenth was pulled at random from the files. The choice fell on Nachman Lewin, age 36, who was recalled from his post by the wall on Rymarska Street. In this manner the group of ten was filled out and sent under German escort to Central Detention. Holzer was in hiding. He knew the mentality of the Germans, and was virtually certain that the ten would be punished to set an example and

that -- since they had gotten their tenth man -- he would not be molested. He presented the chief of the Disciplinary Bureau with 10,000 zlotys to cover any unforeseen eventualities, and asked the latter to let him know if he was going to be summoned. It cost him 10,000 zlotys, but he saved his neck. He was mistaken: the authorities did not order the "real" culprit to be delivered up to them. A few days later the executions took place in the courtyard of Central Detention. A reserve platoon of SP officers was present. The condemned men were escorted by their fellow officers; they walked silently and calmly, each to his own post. The prison courtyard was plainly visible from the balconies and rooftops of the apartment buildings across the street; there the families of the condemned were filling the air with weeping and lamentation. A platoon of Polish policemen formed up in a line. The volley was quite loud, yet the collective cry of despair from across the street -- which seemed to swell all through the ceremony into a mighty staccato -- vibrated in the air as the salvo went off, and drowned out the reports of a dozen rifles. The echo of the cry had not yet died away when from the other side of the street came a scream and a crash: Ira<?> Lewin had jumped from a fourth-floor balcony with her two-year-old child onto the pavement below.

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On his large masculine hand she placed her own, white and well-manicured, and with a roguish smile in her green eyes whispered:

"You will be my husband."

Julian smiled and mumbled something to the effect that he took this to be a joke. "After all, you're a married woman."

The woman waved her hand dismissively. "From the time I met you everything and everyone has had no meaning."

They were sitting in a large cafe, deserted at this hour. Irena was the wife of a doctor. She was seventeen when she married Froim Orenstein, a young and handsome physician. The first time Julian saw her was before the ghetto had been created, when he appeared in her husband's office to get a typhus shot. She was sitting at a desk taking down his personal data.

"Last name?"

"Traube."

She had dark brown hair and immaculate skin.

"First name?"

"Julian."

She had thick lustrous unruly hair reaching down to her shoulders.

"A splendid girl," Julian thought. "A splendid girl -- there's no other way to put it. I'd like to have such a wife."

"Profession?"

"Architect."

"Age?"

"Thirty-five."

"That will be two zlotys," she said, without looking up from the sheet of paper.

"A splendid girl," he droned to himself as he went down the stairs.

He saw her again a few months later. After the ghetto was set up, they moved into the same building the Traubes lived in. The doctor was a passionate card-player and needed a fourth for bridge. She was a captivating hostess, with a melodious voice and perpetually smiling green eyes. That evening Julian picked out his tie with greater care than usual. When the doctor introduced him to his wife, she did not make the same impression on him as on the first occasion. "A charming housewife," he characterized her in his thoughts. On the other hand, Julian made an unusual impression on Irena. She sat next to her husband opposite Julian and did not take her eyes off of him. That evening Irena recorded in her /26/ diary: "I have met a man who has taken away my peace of mind." "I feel something I am unable to define," <she thought to herself.> "He is handsome, he has a beautiful head and remarkable hands. No, that's not it. Fredek is better-looking. He didn't talk much, but he has a gorgeous voice, deep and melodious, although he tends to drawl out his sentences. He's affected. Yes, without a doubt he's blasé and affected. But those hands of his, with

their fluid gestures, as if he had just laid down the reins -
- those rough hands don't go with the rest of his body. They
are too large and too powerful. I've lost my mind, or maybe
I'm half-asleep. I need to have a talk <with> him. That
will cure me."

They often met <to play fives?> in the House Committee's
clubroom, or at all-night parties. Julian and Fredek became
friends. They treated Irena with deference. It was a
pleasure to talk with this lively, good-humored and spirited
doctor's wife. For her part, Irena quite openly displayed
her adoration. She spoke to him of it, and wrote him letters
filled with the pain of infatuation, letters in which she
mocked herself. "I am very amorous," she wrote archly, which
was untrue. She had married without love, not wanting by her
refusal to bring unhappiness to her husband or her parents,
who viewed Irena's early marriage as a chance for her to
settle down by the side of her respectable husband and put
aside her antic ways and the reckless company she used to
keep. They calculated that once she was married to the
handsome doctor, she would change her circle of friends and
her wardrobe, and would stop being the little savage whose
only adornment was a beret that she changed once every six
months. And, indeed, before long she had turned into a woman
whose passion was sports and the young men who pursued
sports, and into the worthy lady of a young but up-and-coming
doctor. She did not love Fredek, but she did like him. He
impressed her with his knowledge and his European culture

/27/, while the solicitous love he surrounded her with at every turn and the indulgence he displayed towards her childish pranks and lack of solemnity won for him her goodwill. People assigned them to the category of happily married couples. She surrounded herself with young men on whom she bestowed the bounty of her lambent wit. She flirted, but never permitted even the boldest among them to dream of anything more than being allowed to escort her to a cafe, or offering her flowers. She found these homages and confessions of love tiresome, and allowed them to each man but once, else he would have to forgo her company and her good graces. By and large the men accepted this state of affairs, shifting from the role of paramour to that of confidant and boon companion: she yielded to no one when it came to having a good time. She was highly self-critical and adept at analyzing things, and thus her attitude towards Julian made her uneasy. Her heart had never beat so fast at the sight of a man, nor had it ever been agitated when he failed to appear on time. She was in love, for the first in her life she was in love. She tried to catch herself in time. She suddenly felt like a little girl who had been robbed of -- who had been charmed by a fairy out of -- the powers given her at birth. "Perhaps it is his placid demeanor that I find so provocative," she thought. "That's not true. I have to admit that there is nothing out of the ordinary in his behavior towards me. It is he himself that I find unusual. I love him! I love him for his intelligence,

his lively mind, his self-control and that inner force that pulsates in each movement he makes. I love him for his stinging sarcasm, for his latent savagery and evident subtlety, for his dreams of glass buildings and the certainty that he will build them. I love him, but doesn't he want me? Doesn't he trust me? He doesn't need me, he still doesn't care about me, and yet I sense that it gives him pleasure to look at me, /28/ and that he smiles approvingly with the corners of those sensual lips of his whenever I manage to get off an apt remark. I must win his heart, he must be mine!" She wept. "Jul!" she wrote. "You have taken away my peace of mind, you have <zabiłeś mi świat deskami>, as if it were not enough that there are walls all around me, Jul -- I can't see a thing, can't feel a thing, can't hear a thing. You are everywhere, your eyes are deceitful, but how could I not trust them? I love you! No, not you, but something in you that is extraordinary and great. I want to absorb you into myself. I feel you in my heart the way a mother feels her infant in her womb."

And as for Julian? At first he regarded Irena indulgently; he liked her; it was a genuine pleasure to talk with her, with this vivacious and intelligent woman. He treated her adoring attitude as the coquetry of a woman spoiled by success. Yet when, after awhile, he became convinced that in her avowals there sounded the tragic accents of truth, he decided to stay away. She sent him letters imploring him to come back; she kept vigils, waiting

for the moment when he would return home. During these supposedly fortuitous encounters Julian would try to talk her out of a feeling that had transformed Irena, leaving her prey to the threat of destruction.

"I cannot offer you anything in return for the feeling that you have for me, Irena. I'm not worthy of this. I am an egoist, a selfish male animal." He strove to blacken himself in her eyes. "In my life there have been the most frivolous of women, for whom I have felt no respect. There is but one woman for whom I have feelings -- it seems to me that you know her. She doesn't want me, she regards me as a pleasant distraction, and she has good reason to do so."

Following one such conversation, she quickly seized his arm, her eyes flashing as she drew her full figure erect -- it was the old, high-spirited Irena back again -- and in an unconstrained tone of voice asked: "And do you like me just a little bit?"

/29/ "Y--yes."

"If I didn't force my love on you, would you want to flirt with me, as you yourself say you have done on many occasions?"

"Naturally."

"Then it's settled. I will treat you like all of my other admirers. You don't have to pay court to me, but you mustn't avoid me. I'll soon get over my feelings of love, but you have to drop this reserved manner with me."

Julian had a great weakness for women. Irena skillfully overcame his scruples. She reverted to being flighty and gay, organizing soirées to which she invited the young men. Julian she treated as a Don Juan, reserving for herself the role of the young and spoiled married woman, avid for sensations. Julian was taken aback at first, but quickly accepted the new situation and enjoyed spending his free moments in the company of the lovely doctor's wife. During one of the many entertainments organized by the House Committee (which raised considerable sums of money in this manner for the poor) Irena cunningly arranged a tête-à-tête. They were young, intoxicated from the dancing, full of life - - and it happened. She gave herself to him, at first with the self-abandonment of an experienced married woman, and ultimately with the shyness and joy of a young girl offering as a gift all the charm of maidenhood. She lay in his arms quietly sobbing; she was happy. The next day, the news hit the apartment building like a bombshell: the doctor's wife was divorcing her husband. Neither threats nor pleas were any use. She defied them all. She told Fredek that she had been unfaithful to him, that she was in love and that she could no longer live under one roof with him. She said the same thing to her sister and her mother. No one's appeals had any effect. Her husband demanded the name of her lover; she refused to give it.

"Is he going to marry you?"

"I don't know. For now, probably not. Don't bear a grudge towards me, Fredek, we had a couple of good years together. I was a good wife to you. I have the greatest respect for you, but I don't love you. I love the man who has given me happiness, who has allowed himself to be loved and may come to love in me in time."

Dr. Orenstein knew his wife, knew that lying dormant within /30/ this outwardly frivolous woman was a strength of will and a tenacity that he could not overcome. To the pain the divorce caused him was added his anxiety for her sake, which was increased by the fact that, as she herself acknowledged, her love was not reciprocated. After a couple of days of mutual torment and fruitless pleas to change her mind, he moved to his parents' apartment on Hrubieszowska...

Irena breathed a sigh of relief: she was free. "How will Julian take it?" she asked herself anxiously. Julian, as usually happened in such cases, was the center of attention for the whole building. He alone had no idea what was going on. He was immersed in his work at the SP. Following the reorganization of the Health Department, he worked for "Pepid." This occupied his time until one o'clock in the afternoon; the rest of his day, until five o'clock, was taken up with his currency dealings. Then he dashed over to Central Detention, where Eugenia Braun had spent the last couple of months. They had caught her on the Aryan side without an armband. He brought her food and tried to use whatever influence he had to make things easier for her.

Thanks to his efforts she was almost free; she did typing in an office and worked in a laboratory, returning to the prison only for the night. After stopping at the prison, Julian would go back to the black-market exchange, which at this time [operated out of] a pastry shop. Most of the time he would get home after curfew. He would change his clothes and rush to the House Committee club room, or to the Orensteins'. This evening he found Irena at home alone. She greeted him with an inscrutable smile. The spacious rooms were all in disarray; there was the kind of emptiness that precedes or follows someone's departure.

"I have divorced Fredek," she said.

"What?"

"I have divorced my husband. He's already moved out. I'm not married anymore, and while I'm not expecting anything from you, I'm happy that I don't have to share my happiness with someone I am completely indifferent to."

Julian was silent. This woman certainly was full of surprises.

"Why /31/ do you keep silent? There wasn't anything else I could do. Don't be angry." She kept up a brave front, although two tears appeared in the corners of her eyes. She fought them off as best she could.

"I deceived you -- but myself as well, and it didn't work. I tried to kill my love, to treat it lightly, sully it, heap scorn on it, turn it into a flirtation, divide it up between you and my husband. It didn't work. Ever since that

evening I sensed that I belonged to you, to you alone -- Julian don't be angry, I won't be a burden to you. You don't have to give me any more of your time than you have in the past. Nothing in your life has to change."

Her voice was breaking, subsiding into a whisper.

"I love you, and I am glad that I can tell you this."

This time, too, she had miscalculated. She could not live without him. She had to see him constantly. For weeks at a time she did not venture out of her apartment, for fear that Julian would come and find her not at home. She waited for him in the evening, hungry for the sight of him. She looked for him at the currency-exchange and at work; she often waited for hours by the gateway of a building he had entered: it was no use trying to pass these encounters off as coincidences -- they both knew better than that. After a couple of months this state of affairs began to weigh on Julian, and despite the sincere sympathy and admiration he felt for Irena he was frequently unable to hide his restlessness. She would submit to his rebukes contritely, more happy to be able to hear his voice than upset by the content of his "just" reproaches. It was only when she was alone that she attempted to wage a struggle with her feelings, and came to the conclusion that she was unhappy; she would count the slow hours until the gates closed, when she would see Julian once again. Tomorrow was Sunday; Julian had the day off and had promised to spend the morning with

her. He would come and sketch his glass buildings. She pushed the table closer to the window for him, as usual.

/32/ Julian sketched, tossing off designs on the little sheets of paper with the rapidity of a machine; it was obvious that his pencil could barely keep pace with his ideas. Or he would sit there, slowly putting the finishing touches on masterfully drawn, beautiful sketches. She sat as quiet as a mouse, with her eyes fixed on his every movement, on every twitch of his pensive brow or the tightly compressed corners of his mouth. She crept up behind him and from over his shoulders watched the sure movements of his hands. She half-closed her eyes: the view from the window repelled her. The huge courtyard was covered with asphalt, and had a large rubbish bin in the center that was almost lost from view amidst the trash heaped up all around it. On this mound stood a man in rags raking through the trash. She shut her eyes. Julian was sketching, but he could hear soft whispering behind him. "I thank thee, God, that he is sitting here, drawing the house -- it's our house, for us, for me and for him." The view of the rubbish bin was replaced by the image of a garden with a house in the midst of greenery and sunshine. Julian lit a cigarette. The dry rasp of the match brought her back from her reverie. She opened her eyes. All that was left of the beautiful vision was the sunshine.

"Jul! My God! I can't stand it! What is that man doing?" She leaned out of the window.

"Calm down, Irenka. That man is eating."

"He's eating out of the rubbish bin," she repeated, pressing her hands to her horror-stricken face. "But there's nothing there except stinking, rotting garbage."

He held her, sobbing convulsively, in his arms for a long time.

"There, there, Irenka. I see this sort of poverty every day. This man eating garbage is not worth mentioning," he lied. "He can still walk, he still has his survival instinct prompting him with the idea of filling his stomach with rotten garbage. In my work I see -- in almost every apartment house -- people living in unheard-of misery, misery no one has ever described or seen before. Every day I see people lying covered with sores and rotting away /33/ from hunger while they live. Each day I have to go into apartments where death has been in residence for a week, in which there is nothing except naked skeletons lying on the floor, covered with the bare feathers they weren't able to sell. They lie still in the foul air, in the stench of putrefying bodies smeared with excrement and coated with feathers. Often they wait weeks to be released by death. Before dawn I am greeted by the tragic eyes of these living corpses: despondent, mad eyes, eyes wracked by fever. Eyes that gaze reproachfully at my fine clothes and well-fed face. Eyes that gaze mockingly at my policeman's cap when my men burst into these apartments always shouting the same thing: 'Everyone downstairs!' They aren't going anywhere. Ever."

Although the ghetto had been in existence for a number of months, the act of crossing the street -- even if it was a matter of a couple of steps -- was still a challenge for the squeamish. Not everyone could reconcile himself to the poverty that, in a multiplicity of forms, stalked the streets of the ghetto. The beggars came in varieties that even the most imaginative film had not depicted.

There was a well-known family from Łódź, made up at first of eight people. Their entire property consisted of two baby carriages, in which he wheeled three children and she the other three. They pushed the carriages along the curb of the street and sang old Yiddish songs. /34/ They had quite beautiful voices. She sang and he sang, backed up by six little childish trebles -- then there were four, then three, and one carriage disappeared along with their shoes and their remaining outer garments. Not long ago the family was down to two persons and a carriage: the man, and his wife who lay in the baby carriage. She was thirty-nine but looked a hundred years old; she lay in the carriage and accompanied her husband's singing. They sang the same songs and received the same grosze as last year. Another well-known character who stood out from the gray mass dying under the walls of apartment houses was Nuch Lejbkorn. Before the war he had owned a house, and in Skierniewice he had had a shop, a wife and five children. The Germans expelled him to Warsaw. In a few months he was reduced to penury. His wife

succumbed to typhus; in the same week his eldest child died. From a subletted room he moved to a shelter, and from there to the street. He and his children wandered the streets of the ghetto. Three of them clung to what was left of his clothes; he carried the fourth on his shoulders. They walked along and sang just one Yiddish song: "*Ich dank dir Got, az ich bin a id.*" Then the children died of starvation. He still had his strength and could still walk, although his legs had by now become swollen. Autumn arrived, and he kept on walking; then winter: he was without shoes or clothing. He still had a down quilt that he fastened around himself with pieces of twine, keeping his arms inside as he walked along. His hideously swollen legs protruded from beneath the quilt, while above it could be seen his withered little face covered with yellow skin and fringed with a pointed little beard. Feathers spilled out of the quilt. Passersby gave him a wide berth on the always jam-packed streets. A few dropped a coin or two into the can tied to his strings, as he strode through the middle of the throngs, contented and with a smile on his lips -- that of an idiot or a sage -- and sang, always the same song: /35/ "*Ich dank dir Got, az ich bin a id.*"

Then there was another idiot who sang a song with only two words to it: "I'm hungry." He sang these two words to the tunes of a waltz and a fox-trot; he did not know how to sing, but could dance in time, constantly repeating the two words, "I'm hungry." The rest of the song was supplied by

those who lay under the walls. Their feeble voices did not carry to the ears of the pedestrians, but the hideous magnitude of their wretchedness hurt the eyes of the sensitive among them.

On the other hand, there was the king of the Warsaw beggars, "*Ale glach*," who went about well-fed and jolly; he had found a career. He had ideas of his own, and knew how to dress; he was always a welcome novelty for idle gapers. He would show up in the street in different costumes, which he would quickly explain with a quip repeated by everyone. He put on a woman's dress: "Rubensztejn, why are you wearing a dress?" "Because I don't have a wife, so today I'm my own wife -- pretty good, huh?" He put on swimming trunks and declared that he was walking on the beach: "Pretty good, huh?" For a couple of days he went around in a dress coat, because he was taking part in a session of the Council, or the Provisions Department: "Pretty good, huh?" He was so popular that the management of the Melody Palace put on a revue entitled "*Ale glach*." The role of Rubensztejn was played by *M*inowicz. In the finale, the man appeared in his own person dressed in tails: the most popular madman in the ghetto.

America had joined the war; JOINT was compelled to keep its activities to a minimum. All of the charitable institutions it had supported up to now were consolidated under a single rubric, *Jüdische Soziale Selbsthilfe*, in which form they attempted to continue their work. Since they could

no longer count on donations from abroad, they adopted a system of aiding those who most deserved assistance. Their concern was directed first of all towards keeping the small handful of Jewish intellectuals alive. With substantial help /36/ from the Council, they succeeded in creating something in the nature of a House of Artists, Writers and Journalists. The club was located at No. 6 Orła Street; it occupied the second floor of a suite of rooms with an entrance from the street. Someone installed a piano. JOINT provided tables and chairs, while the artist members themselves decorated the walls with paintings. They created a board of directors, which after much cajoling drummed up fifty-two members including twelve painters, eight journalists, eight stage-designers, eighteen writers and six musicians. <Pozostali artyści, cenienie i wartościowi?> musicians could support themselves on their professional earnings; they made quite good money, as the four theaters in the ghetto were highly successful. The same was true of concerts and the cafes, which mounted stage-productions; they were nearly always filled to capacity.

In contrast to this, the painters, journalists and writers were completely bereft of any means of earning a living. The members of the club received breakfast, lunch and dinner at reduced prices. To be sure, the fare was meager and reserved for the members themselves: for lack of funds even their immediate families could not take advantage of the board arrangements. Yet the organizers held out the

hope that in time they would succeed in so managing the club's affairs that it would become a genuine place of cultural work and relaxation for valued minds. "At present our greatest task is to keep Jewish creative artists alive. We are not in a position to ease the plight in which huge numbers of Jews find themselves in the ghetto. If the war goes on much longer these people are doomed to die, and we are powerless to stop it. Sad and tragic is the fate of these people, but we have to tell ourselves that the loss of a single creative artist is more agonizing than the death of ten thousand ordinary people." Gitterman, the director of JOINT, was making a speech. "And that is why we are going to do as much as we can to preserve /37/ the lives of members of the Jewish creative vanguard." The doleful but lofty words died away, the applause died away, and the members of the creative vanguard went on starving to death. Yet the prevailing mood was astonishing. Hungry men in threadbare clothes -- their better garments had long since gone to the clothes-merchants -- talked about art, created, wrote, and painted. Their ascetic faces and long hair, with their aesthetic inner lives, produced an extraordinary impression. If the club was their world, they deserved the appellation of saints.

Szternfeld, Gancwajch and Kohn <kusili?>; Gitterman's words. "These people are doomed to die" seemed to be the motto for the entire population of the ghetto. That was what every person in the street thought, as well as the president

of the Council, Czerniaków. And although the leaders of the ghetto pondered deeply over each and every step, and the administration of the Provisions Department wrestled for hours with the problem of food distribution, in the end they came to the conclusion that it was no use. They had to save the intelligentsia; they saved as many as they could with the food supplies left over after dishonest hands had stolen their share...

At the beginning of 1942, the "Office for Combating Usury" was liquidated by order of the authorities. The partnership of Szternfeld and Gancwajch was dissolved. Szternfeld pressured the administration of the SP into absorbing the former officers of "13" into its ranks. Szternfeld agreed to let Szeryński make the selections; those rank-and-file men who were, in the opinion of the SP administration, the least likely to cause trouble were taken on. The majority of the former officers of "13" were transferred to the hitherto innocuous Emergency Service. They could not do without their caps: rumors were circulating that, come spring, the number of labor camps was to be increased. Dawid Szternfeld /38/ was still powerful, even though everyone could see that he was up to something. Following Kohn and Heller's example, he set up a wholesale firm, with the Germans as its customers.

Editor Gancwajch was not too worried about having to exchange his three-starred cap for a civilian hat. He retained the post of administrator for several dozen

apartment buildings, as well as his role as Trustee for the Emergency Service. He was even satisfied with the change, since the reputation of "13" had bothered him. He wanted, you see, to play a certain role in the history of the ghetto, the role not of a Gestapo agent but of a philanthropist. He was not alone in this blameless obsession. Others who suffered from it were people of the stature of engineer Sztolcman, Gepner (fie on such juxtapositions!), Szeryński, Kohn and Heller, Giterman and every single one of the directors of JOINT. Giterman had set up shop on Orła Street; Sztolcman handed out jobs, naming worthy social figures to directorships. Szeryński strove to drill the rank and file of the SP up to the standards of the regular police. Kohn and Heller presented the ghetto with a transportation system in the form of horse-drawn streetcars, which acquired the popular name of "kohnhellerki." A ride cost one zloty, and despite heavy usage the company lost money. Through the Emergency Service, Mrs. Gancwajch donated a genuine horse-drawn carriage to the ghetto.

For his part, Czerniaków, the head of the Jewish Council and a man of good will, carried on his shoulders a burden beyond the strength of one man. It mattered a great deal to him that his deeds be recorded in the history of the ghetto. He reacted to every order as if it were a slap in the face aimed at him personally. He agonized and remained at his post; he gave assistance where he could -- often from his own slender resources. He was full of evil forebodings that he

confided only to his wife, his /39/ silent partner. Outwardly, on the street or at the Council, he maintained an air of strict solemnity, trying to give his face an expression of hopefulness. He knew that the expression on his face mirrored the mood of the ghetto. The ghetto was reduced by another street: "Surely there's nothing to fear - - the president has returned from a meeting with the Germans in a good mood. So there can't be anything terrible threatening the ghetto." The Germans hastily put up walls down the middle of a street, even though the weather was not suitable for wall-building: "Surely there's nothing to fear, because the president is in a good mood." The Germans closed the pedestrian-crossing at the intersection of Żelazna and Chłodna, the only link to the little ghetto; only rickshaws and *kohnhellerki* were allowed to cross: "Surely there's nothing to fear; the president said he was hopeful that the Germans would build a footbridge." Czerniaków wore his cheerful expression while suffering doubly in the quiet of his own home. His private life had ceased to exist; for him there was more to every decree, more to all the constant refinements and changes the Germans made in the ghetto, than met the eye. There was more to the innocent act of closing the pedestrian-crossing on Żelazna than a concern for improving the flow of traffic on the overburdened artery, even though the Germans began constructing a pedestrian bridge to connect the two sidewalks. The rapidly progressing construction of walls was to provide a barrier to smuggling,

yet Adam Czerniakow was filled with anxieties. Fear held him in its grip, but the majority of the inhabitants of the ghetto were in tolerable spirits.

The Jews had become somewhat inured to the sight of misery, and a part of "those who were doomed to die" were dying. Their mortuaries were their own communal apartments, the shelters or the streets, and their last resting places were mass graves in the cemetery.

The rest <of the populace?> roused themselves from their apathy. New workshops, albeit small ones, made their appearance. With the assistance of the Germans' Department of Barter Trade, the so-called /40/ *Transferstelle*, they sold finished goods, chiefly to the Gestapo.

As alarmed as they were about the walls (there were even rumors that the entire ghetto was to be enclosed within an uninterrupted wall), they counted on the arrival of cold weather to halt the construction until spring, by which time the war might be over.

Winter came, harsh and nightmarish. Those who had to die died. The mortality rate hit 7,000 a month, even though the typhus epidemic had abated. The construction of the walls came to a standstill. Thousands of families who lived on streets near a checkpoint heaved a sigh of relief. Yet they were not destined to remain undisturbed for long. Winter passed, the first days of spring arrived, and the work on the walls got underway.

Among the unusual events of this period should be mentioned Szeryński's arrest, the death of two Jewish Gestapo agents, and the downfall of the old Szternfeld-Gancwajch gang.

The director of the SP was imprisoned on the Aryan side. His apartment was searched **<na podstawie dowodów>** and two fur-coats were discovered. Szeryński was not especially popular; neither the general populace in the ghetto nor his subordinates were well-disposed towards him. He was an operator, an assimilated Jew, a refractory horse that the ghetto had failed to subdue and thrust into the harness of a reconverted Jew. Would he escape the death penalty or not? He had influential friends from his many years of service with the Polish Police; for the time being he sat in prison. His successor was **<Jakub>** Lejkin. Inspector Mendel, to whom the post should have gone by rights, did not receive it. Lejkin, the officer for special assignments, shouldered /41/ the enormous weight of running the machinery of the SP. He understood the situation perfectly, had a flair for organization, and was a superb commander. Although no taller than a twelve-year-old boy, he impressed those under his command with his energy and resolve, as well as with the timbre of his voice: this diminutive man had a sonorous metallic voice that rang with authority. He was nicknamed "the Napoleon of the SP."

There was something unusually mysterious about the Szternfeld-Gancwajch affair. Agents of the Gestapo came to

their apartments during the night, but found neither Gancwajch nor Szternfeld at home. Their wives were left in peace. The men had clearly been tipped off. It was officially announced that they were being sought, and warrants for their arrest were circulated among all the ghettos in Poland. In Warsaw, the Council had posters put up directing the Jewish population to turn Gancwajch and Szternfeld, in the event they showed themselves, over to the police. Likewise, the chairmen of the House Committees were ordered to post notices in the gateways of all apartment buildings in the ghetto, to the effect that the death penalty would be imposed on anyone who harbored the criminals wanted by the authorities, Gancwajch and Szternfeld.

The second Passover in the ghetto. The Jewish Council again obtained permission to bake matzo. The Provisions Bureau was able to distribute a half-kilogram more [per person] than in the previous year. During the course of the year tens of thousands of residents had [died], their places taken by two or three times their number: /42/ Jews expelled from small towns. There was probably not a single family in the ghetto in which death had not inflicted losses during the year.

The first seder night. The holiday of remembrance. Families gathered around the tables spread with white tablecloths. Mechanically they repeated the words of the Haggadah -- what did they care about the fate of their

brethren from thousands of years ago? Last year, the father was still here, and the mother, the brothers, sisters and husbands. At the Traubes' the tablecloth, still white and large enough for twenty-four persons, was folded in half. The same guests were at the table: <Moryc and Janka, Aniela and Jakub Traube, Julian, Róža and her husband, Basia and hers.> No, not all of them: Fela is a widow now, sitting at the table with her daughters. The mother and daughters furtively wipe away tears. Everyone is weeping. Jakub Traube valiantly battles the tears in his throat. He cannot go on with the recitation of the Haggadah: two months ago he lost his brother. The latter was walking along Karmelicka. A German vehicle, transporting prisoners to the Pawiak, drove up. The German sitting on the right side of the cab was amusing himself by hitting pedestrians; Abram Traube, finding himself within reach of the thick truncheon, caught a blow to the head. He fell, the base of his skull fractured. Inflammation of the brain set in, followed by death. He left a wife and four children. Mrs. Gajfus learned of her husband's death through official channels. He had been seized in a round-up during the summer and sent to the labor-camp in Kawęczyn. Basia's husband, Herman, lost both of his parents in the same week; they died of typhus. Karol lost his mother, who died in Central Detention. The old woman had gone out to get bread and had forgotten to put on her armband. She ran into a patrol of gendarmes, who sent her to Central Detention where, two weeks later, she died of a heart

attack. "I thank Thee, O God, that Thou hast preserved unto me those that are dearest to me," sighed Jakub quietly as he cast a poignant glance at his wife, whose head was bowed, his children and his sons-in-law. /43/ He went on with the reading of the Haggadah, trying to give his voice its customary lilt. It was drowned out by the women's sobbing. And thus it was in every Jewish home that evening: weeping and anxiety over what the near future held in store, weary hearts constricted by an iron band. The fathers shut the Haggadah, ending with the words, "*Bshono habo b'Jerushalaim.*"

Julian was on his way back from a meeting of the shareholders in the Artists' Garden. He felt defeated, but had still not thrown in the towel. "Strange folk, this tribe of artists," he reflected. Last year, the summer season had handsomely repaid their investments, which had amounted to a couple of thousand zlotys apiece. The business was free of debt, and yet the artists voted unanimously to close down the cafe. They decided to convert the entire garden into a playground, even though this would bring in a minimal return. The fact that each of them had a family had not prevented them from sharing last year's proceeds generously with their fellow artists. "Try to understand," they explained. "We can't stand the sight of these guys in their fine clothes and their women all done up with rouge. They sit there casually sipping their coffee and stuffing their faces with wild

strawberries and cream, while there is so much misery all around them."

"But you make money off this, money that you can turn around and use for what you consider to be worthy goals."

"No, you just don't understand. This is dirty money."

The resistance of the six men <przypadkowej> to the cafe was heightened further by their hopes of making a fair amount of money from their creative endeavors. The president of the Council had decided to come to the aid of the artists. Because the Council Chamber in which the councilmen held their deliberations (often in the presence of representatives of the German authorities) was in deplorable condition -- the ceiling had been covered with cracks as far back as the beginning /44/ of the war, plaster had fallen out, the decorative pilasters were missing in places, and the neglected walls had turned black -- the Council decided to renovate the hall. Czerniaków, who had been quietly supporting the painters by buying one or two paintings for the Council's collection from each of them, succeeded in wresting a larger appropriation [for the repairs], on the grounds that the job of renovating the Chamber would be done by artists. In this way he would get to provide assistance to artists living in penury, while at the same time the Council would get a beautifully-done interior. There was some opposition, especially among the Orthodox councilmen, who drew attention to the squalid conditions prevailing in the yeshivas. However, Czerniaków's motion carried in the

end, and the Council approved a rather large budget for the renovation of the Chamber. In addition to the architectural remodeling, the plan called for pictures to decorate the walls, new chandeliers and stained glass for the windows. The "several tens of thousands of zlotys" the Council appropriated for this purpose offered plenty of fodder for debate for the know-it-alls in the ghetto. The chief reproach directed at the councilmen was that they were callous and extravagant, but subconsciously everyone who did not depend directly on Council assistance was glad: evidently things were not so bad, if the Jewish Council was fixing up the Council Chamber. So it followed that the ugly rumors about the Jews being expelled from Warsaw to the region of Belz or Lublin were the figments of ailing minds. Was Czerniaków such an aesthete? Did he want, perhaps, to erect a monument to his patronage as president of the Council, or did he consult only his own viewpoint **<własne przez nikogo nie wypowiedziana>**? The group of artists stood to benefit, and eagerly set to work on the project.

A composition entitled "Job" and painted by Trachter, Puterman and Frydman was to hang on the largest wall. The stained-glass windows were made /45/ by Śliwniak, **<Elionowicz?>** and Rabinowicz. Ostrzęga began work on a couple of sculptures, and others were to be produced by a dozen other artists, on religious themes. Moreover, the *Transferstelle* demanded that the Council supply two artists

to help organize an exhibition on the Aryan side, to be called "Produced by Jews in the Ghetto."

The exhibition was to be purely commercial in nature and to promote the expansion of the barter trade between the ghetto and the Aryan side.

The exhibition on Królewska raised a lot of eyebrows in the ghetto. The Jews, accustomed to getting nothing from the Germans but the lash, were greatly astonished, and suspected some kind of trick. What kind they did not know, but there had to be something behind it. However, an innocuous episode, related with glee by the painters in charge of setting up the display booths, showed that the exhibition was a touchy subject for the Germans. When the work was nearly completed, they were asked whether they could not come up with something to decorate the main hall. After a brief huddle, the artists offered to create the figure of a craftsman, in high relief and larger than life-size. Herr Knoll was delighted with the proposal. When the enormous figure of a Jew standing at his anvil was hung on the wall, Knoll could not find words to express his appreciation. He shook hands with each of the men. Feeling in his pockets, he presented Eljaszowicz with a silver cigarette-case, and Puterman with a silver lighter.

"The next day, we reported for work as usual," related Eljaszowicz. "We had a few little things to finish up. We enter the hall, and there lying on the floor is our Jew. /46/ In walks Knoll and says, 'It had to come down. My

superior was displeased with it.' I asked him whether I had to give back the cigarette-case," he concluded drolly.

In the spring of 1942, after half a year of relative peace, the Warsaw ghetto once again suffered a jolt in the form of a whole array of unnerving changes. The long-rumored increase in the demand for Jews for the labor-camps came to pass. The round-ups of 1939 were repeated, with one difference: they were conducted by the SP. For men between the ages of 16 and 50, venturing out into the street was fraught with the same peril as during the first days of the German invasion.

A single policeman walking down the street presented no danger, but as soon as there were two, the street they were on would become empty, the young men who lacked proper papers fleeing in panic into the entrance-ways of buildings.

Meanwhile, as the round-ups were going on, work proceeded on the construction of the walls, and the ghetto correspondingly lost more streets every few days. Jews were compelled to move again. Successively detached from the ghetto were the odd-numbered side of Elektoralna, the even-numbered side of Rymarska, then Tłomackie together with the synagogue and the Judaic Library, the even-numbered side of Przejazd, Mylna, Nowolipki and the eastern end of the odd-numbered side of Świętojerska. The Jews moved out, some of them for the third, others for the fourth, fifth or sixth time in two years. The entire ghetto was to be enclosed by a

wall running down the middle of the street. Wagons, hand-trucks, rickshaws and carts /47/ loaded with household goods filled the streets. The wheels of overloaded wagons would break: pots and pans, and wardrobes would clatter to the pavement, and mirrors would shatter into hundreds of pieces. This time the people left many things behind, taking with them only what they deemed indispensable. From dawn to dusk lines of wagons carrying furniture stretched the length of the ghetto's streets. The round-ups for the camps paled in comparison with the mass relocations, and the latter -- each wagon-full of furniture representing a little drama -- were overshadowed by another set of wagons that simultaneously made their appearance in the streets of the ghetto. These carried no furniture, but were piled high with quilts and pillows and filled with people who sat and swayed with the halting movements of their emaciated horses. They were deportees from the small towns surrounding Warsaw. Their look of resignation, their hunched shoulders and their immobility spoke volumes more than the despairing cries of the half-crazed individuals who made their way into the ghetto on foot alongside the official caravan of wagons. Those who walked were fugitives; they had not been deported. They told incredible stories of mass executions of old men and women and children, as well as new tales of gas chambers, into which hundreds of persons would be herded and gas then released. No one believed them: "It's an exaggeration"... "Maybe it happened in some little town"... "But that's

impossible"... "The poor souls made it all up, no doubt to get sympathy from the people of Warsaw." Such was the general opinion. Only one person in the whole ghetto believed -- knew with total certainty - that it was true, and that was the president of the Council. Every day he spoke with the members of the small *Judenräte* that had been disbanded. These eye-witnesses, public figures, were people one could trust. Czerniaków's powerful frame sagged beneath a crushing weight of anxiety over the fate of the Warsaw ghetto.

/48/By the end of May the ghetto was enclosed within a continuous wall, which ran down the middle of the streets that marked its boundaries. Together with dozens of overcrowded streets that were excluded from the ghetto, the Jewish cemetery -- which was of the utmost necessity to the ghetto -- was left on the Aryan side. The only way to get to it was with a pass issued at SP headquarters. The wall measured three meters high by eleven kilometers in length. The number of crossing points was reduced to five. One might have thought that the crisis was at hand, that the illegal delivery of foodstuffs to the ghetto had been stopped, and that the Jews would have to depend on the daily allotment of one-eighth of a kilo of bread per person. There was even a panic, as at the inception of the ghetto. Shop owners concealed their merchandise, and prices rose. This lasted for only a couple of days. The smuggling continued. The clandestine routes were cut off -- the cellars of adjoining Jewish and Aryan apartment buildings, and the apartments that

shared walls. All that remained were the official channels: the crossing-points and the site-workers. The gendarmes, accustomed to the enormous income, eased the passage of goods (which they let through at night to minimize the risk) via the checkpoints. A lesser, but still important, category was the foodstuffs smuggled in by Jews as they returned from working [outside the ghetto]. Corrupt gendarmes would subject them to a perfunctory search, during which they pretended that their fingers did not detect the flour, lard and other such goods the workers had under their clothes, particularly in their trousers. "They won't be able to cope with us," the optimists boasted. "They'll manage," said the pessimists. "The Germans know full well what's going on, and if they want to, they'll find a way to deal with us."

/49/ The proverbial vitality of the Jews kept the events of the past few weeks from having a dampening effect on the life of the ghetto. The walls, which had been the subject of debate for a year, which had kept the residents of the ghetto lying awake at night, turned out in practice not to be so terrible as was anticipated. Nothing, in fact, had changed: on the contrary, the strict isolation created at the expense of a colossal amount of work gave promise of a prolonged period of tranquillity. The walls guaranteed that the ghetto's boundaries were now fixed until the end of the war. A sense of heightened well-being was even discernible. With the ghetto now shut tight, the Polish Police withdrew; only the 4th Precinct station remained on Lubeckiego. Similarly,

the suppression of "No. 13" gave rise to a whole array of illegal enterprises such as distilleries, soapworks, flour-mills and bakeries. The specter of constant blackmail and expensive bribes had been lifted. The huge numbers of these illegal enterprises freed the ghetto from having to import finished goods like bread, soap, spirits, flour and so on, which were [now] produced in the ghetto from raw materials brought in from the outside. This arrangement provided a living for a huge number of entrepreneurs who in turn employed thousands of workers. As a result, living conditions markedly improved in the ghetto during this period. However, since the ghetto could not be without some form of tragic curse, there was the overcrowding [to contend with] at this time. The high mortality rate, which was increasing by a thousand deaths a month, could not offset the reduction in the size of the ghetto, together with the continual influx of fugitives and deportees. A sensation of sorts was created by two groups of deportees that arrived in the ghetto. These were a thousand Jews from Germany, and five hundred Polish Gypsies.

The German Jews received special treatment from the authorities. /50/ Several hundred well-to-do families were installed in private apartments. The rest were allotted space in the synagogue building on Tłomackie. Because the synagogue was located on the Aryan side, a couple of hundred meters from the crossing-point at the intersection of Leszno and Tłomackie, the SP was ordered to post sentries.

Moreover, the Council received special instructions regarding the German Jews; it was ordered to hire as many of them as possible for official duties, while the able-bodied men were given jobs by a German firm. The solicitous attitude of the authorities, the well-known loyalty of the German Jews -- their attachment to the *Vaterland* despite the barbarous mistreatment they were subjected to by their adopted homeland -- and the antagonism between German and Polish Jews made it impossible for them to work together. In addition, in the absence of any information about the applicants for Community posts, it was greatly feared that a dishonest element might, by acting as informers, stir up trouble for the Council and do significant harm to the Community. The Council was extricated from this awkward situation by a fortuitous event, namely, the Germans' allocation of a new building at No. 109 Leszno for the quarantine; the [old] quarantine at No. 98 was too small. Several dozen German Jews were given jobs at the new facility. The Council was obliged to hire Ernest Minhauzen for an official post inside the ghetto; in view of his qualifications, he was assigned to work at the SP. Minhauzen had been an officer of gendarmes in pre-Hitler Germany. He was given the rank of squad commander and the function of acting as liaison between SP headquarters and the German authorities.

The German Jews who arrived in the ghetto had, sewn onto their clothing on the left breast, gold six-pointed stars bearing the inscription "*Jude*." In the Warsaw ghetto they

were ordered to put on the mandatory white armbands with blue stars. None of them, however, tore off the German gold /51/ patches; they wore both marks. Even Minhauzen, who had to wear two armbands, the white one and the police armband, as well as the policeman's cap and badge, likewise kept his gold star -- for which, a few months later, he would pay with his life. Concerning the Gypsies, the Council received only a single instruction: that they were to put on white armbands with the letter Z in red. They were housed in a vacant shelter at No. 10 Wałowa Street. Their colorful poverty, which adorned all the metropolises of Europe, drew hundreds of idle gawkers from the neighboring streets during the first few days. This tiny band of paupers regarded their new comrades with an air of desperation.

Aware of the thievish propensities of Gypsies, the Provisions Bureau allotted them a double ration of foodstuffs. This did little good. Scarcely two days after the new arrivals had settled in, the SP began to be inundated with reports of thefts. They swept up and down the streets all day long, robbing pedestrians, booths and stores. The white armbands and the crowding made it difficult to identify them. They elbowed their way through the perpetually jammed streets, picking men's pockets and snatching women's handbags.

The crowding in the streets was a plague against which every measure that was taken came to nothing. Of no use were the Council's appeals that the people not go out without a

clear purpose; nor did it do any good to post SP officers at frequent intervals in an attempt to make the foot-traffic flow in a single direction. From early morning until the curfew hour, dense crowds up and surged down the streets. The Council's appeals had an impact only on the poor. They were the only ones to be out on the street without a clear purpose. Yet they went out onto the streets to escape their filthy, stinking kennels. It made no difference [to them] that they brought with them filth and lice, which easily spread to these clean, well-dressed men and heavily-rouged women.

/52/ The street, where there was air and sunshine, beckoned to the poor, and, anyway, they did not [bother to] read the appeals of the Jewish Council.

They were just as indifferent to the proclamation of a new registration-drive. The slips of paper issued by the Council, the Labor Battalion or the *Arbeitsamt* did not protect them from being rounded up to work for the Community or in the labor-camps. They were the first and the last.

The registration-drive, which was being conducted by the *Arbeitsamt*, was the fourth one in succession. It covered men and women age twelve and up. After the individual presented all forms of identification -- receipts from previous registrations, financial records, professional credentials and employment records -- the *Arbeitsamt* would issue a "*Meldekarte*," which was something like a passport with a photograph; among other things it noted the bearer's

profession and place of work. The *Arbeitsamt* was subordinate to the Council; however, it had a German director on hand who was in overall charge. The ordinance making it mandatory to carry the *Meldekarte* provoked a certain amount of anxiety in the ghetto. Jews made efforts to obtain false work documents. As a result of the *Meldekarten* and rumors of an impending deportation, tailor's and cobbler's shops, heretofore half-empty, now were filled with craftsmen who, in exchange for some soup and a work document, devoted several hours a day [to their trades]. In response to the rumors, Jews strove by any and all means to have their names struck from the rolls of charitable organizations; according to hearsay, the Germans were going to expel from Warsaw Jews supported by the relief agencies and similar institutions. Who spread these rumors? Where did the "omniscient ones" get their information, which drove sleep from the eyes of tens of thousands of vulnerable people? It was hard not to believe [the rumors]; the residents of the ghetto had had ample opportunity to see for themselves that these reports, /53/ which they had casually shrugged off at first, contained a great deal of truth. They remained unconvinced even when a rumor was fulfilled and there were victims: they adjusted. The Jews moved on to the next rumor; again they would not believe it: "It was impossible"..."it was technically unfeasible." Every prediction of disaster portended tragedy for thousands. Every rumor raced like wildfire through the ghetto; each one seemed absurd and unrealizable, and each one

came true. The ghetto was alert, it registered every sign accompanying the rumor; with watchful eye it followed the actions of the "high and mighty." Whether they were in a good or a bad frame of mind, it did not escape the notice of the ghetto's residents. The latest rumor was that those Jews who were without work and who had not lived in Warsaw prior to the war would be expelled. Surely it was impossible? The "leading citizens" did not reveal what they knew even to their closest family members; they merely allowed themselves to be observed. They knew that they were on view before the watchful and searching gaze [of the populace], that their actions and virtually every gesture of theirs always conveyed as much as they might have said -- or perhaps they were unaware of this fact.

Moryc Kohn was bringing Jews from Łódź to Warsaw. they could see how powerful he was from the way the bureaus officially registered, and accepted payment for, the illegal transfers. SS trucks crossed the frontier between the Government-General and the Reich, as well as the boundaries of the two ghettos, without hindrance. Almost every week crowds of people greeted their relatives as they descended from a vehicle in the courtyard of the firm of Kohn & Heller.

There was no mail service to Łódź. Moryc Kohn transported /54/ thousands of letters without charge. The ghetto was grateful to him; Kohn had succeeded in winning over public opinion. The population of the ghetto kept an

eye on him; nothing he did escaped the watchful attention of the residents. His old sins were forgotten, and no one knew about the new ones. He cut a fine figure: whether walking in the streets of the ghetto or riding in a rickshaw or a German car, he was the focus of constant observation and excitement. Crowds of beggars waited hours for him to appear at his offices or at home. He turned no one away. He distributed alms right and left. He was always surrounded by brokers and clients who accompanied him to his offices and his apartment, and to the checkpoints. In the eyes of public opinion, the young Gestapo-men were a black mark, a reminder of his former activities and the clinching argument for that dwindling band of people who regarded the ghetto's leading tycoon with suspicion. But his free and easy manner, refined elegance and dignified bearing produced such a favorable impression that it was difficult to believe that this young man, with his captivating charm, could have such unethical dealings on his conscience. His popularity rose by the hour. Moryc Kohn gave his youngest sister, whom he had recently brought from Łódź, away in marriage. There was so much interest in this event, it was as if the Zaddik had come down from Mount Calvary for the occasion. The young couple produced a sensation that lasted for two or three weeks. The groom was Leon Skowron, an SP officer assigned to Pepid. By way of a dowry he received a factory that manufactured honey and sweets. He remained in the SP; however, he no longer had to report for duty.

The fact that Leon Skowron, the brother-in-law of Moryc Kohn, kept his SP officer's cap, and Kohn's brother was given a post with officer's rank in the SP **<również bez przydziału>**, was readily noted by public opinion, and put down as a plus for the SP.

/55/ In a topical marionette show [presented] in one of the most elegant of the coffee-houses, Sztuka, at No. 2 Leszno, there were -- alongside the portrayals of popular figures in the ghetto -- two puppets of Moryc Kohn and Zysze Heller, with superb dialogue. There was something in it about fishing in troubled waters, and about a little automobile. Yet the applause that Kohn gave himself night after night bade others to believe that it was all just a mischievous puppet-show and not the truth.

The prestige of the SP was further enhanced by a forty-member orchestra that came into being at about this time. The conductor was the popular musician <Fatoszek?>, recently arrived after his escape from Lwów. The orchestra consisted of forty officers of the SP. A dozen or so topnotch jazz musicians were easily recruited with offers of police caps and light duty. Present at the inaugural concert, which was given in the Femina theater, were *Untersturmführer* Brandt and *Oberscharführer* Mende. Making a big hit with aficionados of light music, this first concert was a colossal success. Later concerts, given in the outdoor cafes, were highly

popular; admission tickets would be snapped up a week in advance of a performance.

There were even those who maintained that it would be a good thing if Kohn & Heller held sway in the ghetto instead of Czerniaków, who, while he might be a decent man, was still an ordinary Jew who wielded no influence with the Gestapo. They would tick off the benefits that would come to the population of the ghetto: "Why, Kohn does whatever he likes. He gets licenses for every one of his ventures right on the spot, and privileges that others can only dream about. For all that, anyone can see /56/ what good intentions this golden man has, how much effort and ambition he contributes to the common good." The ghetto looked on him with admiration. Everyone knew that this lightning career would meet its inevitable end, that he had to perish as so many others before him had done. Although -- who could say? -- perhaps fortune would smile on him, perhaps he would not reach too high, would not forget who he was and thereby save his neck. If he was careful, he might avoid the ineluctable fate of his chosen profession. For the moment he was on top. In the shadow of his power, scarcely visible, were such minions of the Gestapo as Inspector Hendel, the two brothers Erlich, Kaner, Mandel, attorney Lewin, Sztoter and Lolek Skosowski, the youthful heir-apparent of the now-disbanded "No. 13," who was already gaining prominence. Each of them was reaping profits, each had some factory or concession, was

buying and selling -- and each one knew that he would end badly, yet each dreamt of greatness and was secretly envious of Kohn. Now envy, in this line of work, was one of a number of hazards. Yet it did not prevent them from being, for now, at his service: obliging, ready to do his bidding, and happy if he invited them to join him at his table in one of the cafes he frequented. The only setback Kohn had experienced thus far was the decree by Auerswald, chief of the Warsaw District, prohibiting Kohn's streetcars -- the popular *kohnhellerki* -- from crossing the intersection of Żelazna and Chłodna streets. Supposedly this was not to be taken too seriously; the stated reason was that the streetcars moved too slowly and held up traffic.

In the Council Chamber the work was in full swing. The masons had finished patching the holes, and the pilasters glistened white with new plaster where the fretwork had been missing. There was a smell of paint; a slight dampness wafted from the floor, despite the strong beams of sunlight that poured in through /57/ the open windows. All around the room flitted the masters of the brush. They worked with concentration and an ardor that had been stifled for three years. (Artistic creation was prohibited under pain of death.) They forgot where they were, they forgot about the ghetto and the walls. They forgot for whom they were working: the sacred flame of creation transported them. They painted, sketched, and made designs from early morning until dusk. They forgot their hunger, even though for the

first time in three years they could appease it. They even forgot about the jealousy that is proverbial among artists. They worked in a single room, exchanging a cross-fire of stealthy glances from one easel to the others. They were creating an inseparable whole, they were intoxicated with a fervor, pent up for three years, for which their only outlet had been interminable discussions about art. The jealousy had vanished somewhere. They were bound together by their three-year-old struggle with poverty and their sorrow for a community that had, in the very first hour of the calamity, cast them aside like something it had never needed. Sorrow, and revulsion towards those who gave them assistance while ordering them to stand in line for a loaf of bread, in return for which their names were taken down and entered, in colored ink, in the columns of charts. For three years their names had shouted out from these pages hymns of praise for the deeds of various social institutions. For the first time in three years, instead of signing receipts for handouts from JOINT or some relief agency, they would get to put their signatures under their own paintings. It made no difference that they were painting together; they were even proud of this -- proud that working in collaboration did not bother them. The place of jealous criticism was taken by mutual appraisal and corrections offered with restraint. The largest picture, the composition "*Job*," was the focus of protracted discussions. The picture had only been sketched out, but one could already perceive that it would be

magnificent, if it were not ruined first. It was being painted by Frydman, Puterman and Trachter. The picture pulsed with a wealth of muted colors and superb technique. Frydman's dynamism and /58/ Trachter's expressiveness, taken together, seemed to be tearing the picture apart. These three artists, whose palettes were so different but who shared a common artistic culture and profound knowledge, were creating a clash of designs that emerged victoriously from each part of the symphony of color: like an orchestra submitting to the powerful hand of the conductor, they sat obediently side by side. The figures of Job's friends, arriving from the four corners of the earth, carried with them the waft of distant places, the fatigue of the journey, and a sincere manifestation of the concern and deep sadness with which Job's condition filled them.

The central figure of Job was cut to the measure of Michelangelo: the drawing, magnified by the capabilities of three artists, rendered a figure worthy of the masters of the fifteenth century. The head of Job rested heavily on one hand: it expressed the tragedy and suffering of thousands of the accursed, downtrodden for centuries. The powerful body, brought low by infirmity, impressed one with the force of inner fervor and anguish; from it radiated the strength of a titan and the perplexity of a gigantic spirit overthrown yet battling on. These three modern artists, who in their own work had repudiated elements of literature, would emerge triumphant from the arduous experiment.

Trachter was standing before the <picture>. His white, paint-spattered apron set off his angular, rough-hewn albino face. He worked without a pause, his eyes wide with astonishment. With a subtle brush-stroke, he brought the differing temperaments of Puterman and Frydman into equilibrium; he reconciled them and joined them together, uniting their profusion of riches into a single whole. With deliberate movements he introduced a design, an unobtrusive and subtle play of tones. Dusk was already falling, the incessant hubbub from the Council building's corridors was dying down; not a single thought was mirrored on Trachter's face: a semi-circle of silence surrounded him. There were none of the familiar jibes that began with "Symchale." This was no /59/ time for jesting; they watched him with admiration, they were under the influence of the "spark of God." He finished. For today it was enough; they clapped him amiably on the shoulders; the moment had passed.

"Symchale, are you tired? Well, you've earned yourself a good dinner today." The contagious word had been spoken: they were infernally hungry, but in excellent spirits. In a couple of weeks the hall would be ready. The Gestapo's administrator for Jewish affairs, *Untersturmführer SS* Brandt was to attend the opening ceremony. President Czerniaków had hinted that he would probably be able to get permission for a one-time exhibition of the paintings. They went out into the street, which was still bathed in sunlight, and went their

separate ways to dinner. An hour later, they were back together again at the Artists' Garden.

The *Aktion* Commences

When it looked as though life in the ghetto had settled down within stable bounds, when it seemed that the evil was now behind them and the Jewish people might get through the war somehow, they added up the suffering they had endured from the beginning of the war up until this moment. They tabulated <the harsh concessions?> to the Germans, by means of which they crammed 600,000 Jews into the tight limits of the ghetto and laid sacrifices and blood-offerings on the altar of a barbarous hatred. They weighed the purpose that the walls were meant to serve, made calculations worthy of the Gestapo's bureaucracy, and concluded that the mind of Satan -- the machine designed to wipe out the Jews -- would be hard put to think up anything else. They reckoned that things had gone as far as they could, that despite the appalling conditions -- the lethal crowding, the unremitting typhus epidemic and the threat of starvation -- they would somehow survive. They were sustained by their faith in the vitality of the Jews. There stirred echoes of the legacy of a thousand years; echoes, conjured up by the generation of the grandparents, of the pogroms in Russia; /60/ echoes of the Inquisition; of the ghettos of olden days; the expulsions; the mass-murders; the "Jewish horse," on whose back the Hamans and Pharaohs of yore rode to scale the

heights. The Hitlerism of the present time was still benign; it had proved to be so in the modern era, this seemingly pivotal era of marvelous inventions, cultural refinement and civilization in the twentieth century. Though unable to profit from its lessons, the Jews knew their history, and history was repeating itself. In Kishinev, a certain elderly Jew was asked, in the midst of a raging pogrom, what the Jews intended to do. To which he responded with a shrug: "Well, they aren't eternal, are they?"

Towards the end of 1942 a plague of round-ups fell upon the ghetto. The Jewish police were rounding up people for the labor-camps. The frequent police raids went on from dawn to dusk, netting male Jews between the ages of 10 and 50. The orders that came into SP headquarters were framed in such a way that the SP had to adopt a stern attitude. Individual patrols were given the task -- under the threat of having to turn in their badges -- of supplying their allotted quota of workers. They detained men who had no job anywhere, or who were employed by small private concerns that were not officially sanctioned.

The most disturbing thing was that no one knew how many Jews in all were to be furnished to the Germans. The daily quota ranged from 1500 to 2000 men. The men rounded up were marched off in groups or conveyed in wagons to the district station, and from there to the *Arbeitsamt* to undergo a perfunctory selection; each group would be held there for twenty-four hours, which allowed time for notifying families

and assembling equipment. The round-ups went on without interruption for several days, causing confusion and disturbances, as well as wrecking the fragile economic structure of the ghetto. When this round of destruction would end was anybody's guess. When they ran out of "unemployed" men on the streets of the ghetto, the Council was compelled to allow men to be taken /61/ out of the <zamkniętych lokali>, which heretofore had been off-limits to the SP. After ten or twelve days even these sources ran dry. The Jewish Council's reports were rejected by the authorities, who threatened to intervene directly. The Arbeitsamt, on the basis of the Meldekarten that had been issued and the applications not yet handed out, came up with a fantastic figure for the number of unemployed Jews. After the round-ups resumed, the number of unemployed men decreased; everyone registered to work in [various] institutions, and there was a stampede to get work in the "shops," where the work was unpaid but where one could get an Ausweis. In spite of their strict orders, the SP patrols were coming back to their district stations with an insufficient number of men. Jews hid in their apartments, and did not venture out into the street. The Jewish Council, faced with the threat that the Germans would carry out their own manhunts, ordered the SP to conduct the round-ups both day and night, starting at the curfew-hour. The chairmen of the House Committees were required to furnish SP officers with exact lists of the men under their jurisdiction.

The notorious curfew-hour had ceased to be a refuge of tranquillity at the end of hard days spent looking for bread, wrestling with anxiety, and eluding the police dragnets. The closing of the gates marked the start of a Gehenna that not infrequently lasted half the night. Every evening, after the gates were shut, dozens of buildings were filled with the sound of police whistles and SP officers shouting, "Everyone downstairs!" The tramping of feet could be heard in all the stairwells. Some people went down into the cellars, others up onto the roofs or into the attics. Most of those who went down to the gates, where their documents were to be checked, had a work Ausweis. A few, having grown weary of the constant harassment, would resign themselves to their fate: /62/ bundles in hand, they would line up along the wall ready to go.

The police would check the lists of tenants, conduct searches of the apartments, and in cases where the men had gone into hiding would take wives, children and elderly fathers as hostages. The hostages would be released when the sought-after person turned himself in; if he did not, even they would be sent off [to the labor-camps]. Another couple of weeks went by, and these resources too were exhausted.

The SP -- spurred on by the threat of losing their badges, ground down day and night by their exhausting work, half-numb from the cries of desperation of struggling men, women, old people and children -- more and more often came back to their district stations empty-handed. The Jewish

Council would submit reports; in these memoranda, running to many pages, it attempted to explain why the labor contingents demanded of it kept getting smaller and smaller. While the German authorities <??> enough, they made no threats at this time, nor did they display any anger. The raids, though they continued, slackened off. The district stations reverted to their normal routine. The Health Department, immobilized for the duration of the round-ups, and Pepid resumed the disinfection campaign. The ghetto nursed its latest wound, this time a deep one that seemed beyond treatment. Life was resilient, and drove one forward; the people were disposed to come to terms with the latest blow. A few letters, barely a dozen in all, from individuals who had been sent to the labor-camps reached the ghetto. Every one knew the contents of these letters: they were working, conditions were not too bad, and there was enough to eat. These dozen letters had a soothing effect on public opinion, even on those who were most afflicted -- the wives with small children and the elderly parents who had been deprived of their breadwinners. If only they could hold out: each day was a small step farther down the hellish path the Jews trod under German domination. And although the German Army had its successes, they believed unshakably in the barbarians' downfall. The God of Israel was mighty, and the spirit of the Jews was as yet unbroken. Carrying the burden of a thousand years of adversity, the Jewish back might bend under the weight of

blows, yet it would push /63/ the lumbering cart of destiny forward.

From all parts of the Government-General bad news reached the Warsaw ghetto. In Lublin, the Jews had been expelled; the entire district was to be cleared of Jews. In Mińsk Mazowiecki, the Jews had been partially expelled; in Kraków 10,000 Jews had been murdered by a Vernichtungskommando squad. In Łódź all children under the age of twelve had been taken away; in Lwów -- expulsion (the "Bridge of Death"). Wave after wave of displaced Jews flowed into the Warsaw ghetto. Haggard faces with ashen lips spoke in whispers of unbelievable things. Robberies, mass shootings, conflagrations and gas chambers.

"And the same thing will happen here": every account ended with this statement. Weary frightened minds looked for overstatements; they brightened at every inaccuracy, every inconsistency <brzmiała okropnością, która kładła na kary przeżyć>.

The Jews knew how to count. If the same thing was supposed to happen in Warsaw, why then did the Germans relocate the deportees? No, surely the newcomers' accounts were blown out of proportion. Those who told the tales would nod sadly and fall silent in mid-sentence.

Still, the kernel of fear sown in the minds of the Warsaw Jews was taking on the form of the Beast of the Apocalypse. And yet everything seemed to contradict the idea that the ghetto was in some kind of danger. The cafes were

filled to overflowing. The Femina was putting on *Turandot*, and the Maska -- <Mirko Efros?>; the Skala ... The Artists' Garden had its orchestra. The SP was to perform *Rhapsody in Blue*. At No. 28 Leszno Avenue, an [indoor?] beach, with showers, was opened with the approval of the authorities. The Jewish Council inaugurated a gigantic playground for children, and started a boarding school on the ruined site of some apartment buildings at the corner of Nalewki and Franciszkańska.

Colorful posters were continually announcing new shows, all of them approved by the authorities. Store windows proudly displayed beautiful cakes, apples <...>

/64/ The Tax Bureau collected taxes and issued manufacturing licenses. Auerswald gave approval for a one-time exhibition of the paintings. Czerniaków headed up the honorary committee. Side by side with the tragedies of daily life -- the wretched carts crawling up and down the streets of the ghetto -- life in the ghetto went on normally.

The news hit like a shell burst. It was on thousands of lips: forty days to live. The Warsaw ghetto was to exist for only forty more days. The most absurd rumor ever to blossom forth in the ghetto; a baseless rumor -- no one knew how it originated or what its source was, whence it had come or who had been the first to utter it. Forty days to live, and that was that. Were they going to murder all the Jews? Shoot more than half a million people? Impossible. Everyone repeated the news facetiously, like a good joke. Forty days

for the ghetto. They laughed: who knows whether the world would last another forty days. On this day the inhabitants of the ghetto acquired a gallows sense of humor. The cafes, restaurants and bars were jammed. By evening vodka was unobtainable anywhere; there was a shortage of alcohol. No one believed these grim tidings of woe. The Jews made light of it; everyone maintained that it was ridiculous, the product of an ailing mind, yet no one could talk of anything else. This utterly stupid piece of gossip, however, led to more chaos than any of the decrees that the ghetto had endured up to this point. The new bacillus, whose name was "40 days," was unlike any of its predecessors. It did not grow or multiply; nothing changed [as a result of it]; it was single-celled and terrifyingly simple. It was ludicrous and improbable. Perhaps the Germans were getting ready to do something, but that was not the same thing as saying that it would be the end of the lives of 600,000 Jews. The microbe called "40 days," nevertheless, had its effect. It spread disorder; people shirked their jobs and the tasks of daily living. Government offices stood half-empty. Jews were not submitting applications or petitions, /65/ nor presenting claims or seeking abatements. Matters that heretofore had seemed exceptional and unjust paled to insignificance before this rumor conveyed in a few simple words.

On the other hand, the *Arbeitsamt* was besieged, from early morning on, by petitioners trying to get their *Meldekarten* or employment certificates issued as quickly as

possible. People were trying to ensure themselves against any eventuality. The Jews counted off the days as they passed. Nothing was happening anyway, so they kept count as a joke. There were still 38 days left; 34; 32. They talked about it every day, several times a day. Nothing was happening to indicate any kind of change. Several perfectly placid days went by. The struggle for existence, the preoccupation with getting one's daily bread impelled people onward, and they forgot about the unnerving rumor. They stopped counting the days as they elapsed; only in the evening, in the middle of a conversation, someone would ask by way of a joke, "So how many days do we have left?" An argument would ensue, and some systematic type would always haul out a notebook with a triumphant flourish and settle the matter. "I have June 15, <1942??> jotted down. Forty days from then would make July 25th." <Ot tor??> there was nothing worth mentioning. There was nothing new at the Council. The councilmen were in the dark; Czerniaków was in a buoyant mood. The work on the Council Chamber was nearing completion. Glaziers were installing the stained-glass windows. [Day] 28: Kohn went to Łódź, and returned this time without bringing anybody with him. 25: Szternfeld and Gancwajch surfaced in the ghetto, causing a minor stir. No one tried to arrest them. They were relaxed and in good spirits, as if they had just returned from a vacation. 24, 23, 22. On the twentieth day, the nightmare they had made light of -- but which had gnawed at them day and night --

assumed a form making it possible to draw a few conclusions. A Vernichtungskommando was in Warsaw, and the Lublin Gestapo had arrived in the city. The rumor took on concrete shape, that of the death's head visible on the caps of SS troops. It cast its ominous shadow over the walled-in /66/ ghetto of Warsaw. Still 19, 18 days to live: nothing occurred. Except this: a couple of times each day, a rickshaw carrying two men in civilian clothes would roll past the sentry-post at the corner of Leszno and Żelazna. The gendarmes would snap to attention. The rickshaw would go down a couple of streets in the ghetto, the two civilians chatting in a relaxed manner and looking around, observantly surveying the scene. From time to time they would step out in front of a shop vending fruit or pastries, order this or that to be wrapped up, pay the asking price and return the way they had come. An hour later two other civilians would pass through the checkpoint, showing their identification papers to these same gendarmes, or else there would be a "new shift" on duty, who would present arms very formally -- the papers must have been quite impressive, to judge from the reaction of the gendarmes. Gestapo officers filled the sentries in, speaking in a whisper <porządkowego>. The civilians behaved quite decorously, were not perturbed by the unruly street traffic or by the hold-ups caused by overloaded handcarts. They frequently got out at a cafe, where they would have some trifle to eat. They peered into store windows. They put up with being jostled by pedestrians, and reacted to the crush

and the Jews brushing up against them with a barely perceptible flash in the eyes or tightening of the jaws. The question: how many days do we have to live? was still always good for a laugh, although it often evoked in the person asking the question no more than a grimace resembling a smile.

In the early part of July a film crew paid a visit to the ghetto. The cameraman, director and crew were all Germans in uniform, chiefly members of SS units. They devoted the first few hundred meters of film to street-scenes. They filmed the beggars, the traffic, elegantly dressed pedestrians, a few window-displays, a Jewish policeman, rickshaw-men, a *kohnhellerka* en route, a *kohnhellerka* at a stop -- they did not overlook a single one of the curiosities that the ghetto had to offer. The camera devoured the swollen bodies covered with sores /67/, the gaunt and elderly faces of children, and the luxuriously dressed women with rouge on their cheeks. Working for a couple of hours a day, they captured the profusion of misery and overcrowding; they skipped from one shot to another, sharply different from the first. When the film had gorged itself on the misery of the beggars, the filthiness of the shelters, the crowding in the streets, the sores and the typhus, the mass graves in the cemetery; and on that which stood in contrast to these: the particles of civilization -- a fine suit, some polished shoes, a pair of pre-war stockings on the calves of a young Jewish woman, a placard advertising

a concert or a play -- when the truth had been absorbed by the film, the director began to organize the material into a scenario.

The film crew stopped in front of the store, Pluton, on Karmelicka. The cameraman set up his camera, and the crew, riding-whips in hand, picked out elegantly dressed pedestrians and explained to them, with the help of two SP officers, what they were expected to do. On cue, several dozen finely dressed ladies and gentlemen entered the dimly lit shop and elbowed their way in a dense pack to the counter. Under huge arc-lights, waitresses with wooden smiles came around offering boxes of candy, chocolate bars and other sweets, which the customers, choking with fear, consumed on the spot. Gentlemen entered the store and departed with boxes of chocolates in their hands. The cameraman shifted his camera around, filming Jews eating chocolate from above, from the side, and *en face*. Then the crew moved outside to the front of the store, where beggars had been stationed to pretend to beg for the coveted little parcels tied up with colorful ribbons. The Pluton lost a couple of thousand zlotys in the space of an hour.

Every day another gathering-place fell victim to the film about ghetto life. The crew would descend on the chosen restaurant or cafe after the proprietor had been given advance notice to /68/ lay in a suitable quantity of menu items. They would then herd a group of pedestrians inside with instructions to eat and drink. They were well-informed,

and knew precisely which establishments could serve up the desired bill of fare. For although there were countless restaurants in the ghetto, gourmet dishes were available in only a tiny number of them. Chez Szulc ordered fifty kilos of carp, twenty roast geese, herring by the dozens, and a great deal of alcohol for the following day. The film crew arrived punctually at the appointed hour. The restaurant was empty and all tidied up. Making a thorough inspection of the glass display-cases with their large platters of food, the film director gave instructions for rearranging the various hors d'oeuvres, adding more calf's liver and goose-meat, and opening several dozen tins of expensive delicacies. Then he started the camera. In the next shot, people were herded in and seated as "couples" at all the tables. The director gave a speech, which was translated by the SP. The guests were to wolf down a quantity of food and wash it down with alcohol. They filmed the waiters as they bustled about the tables carrying trays heaped high with select hors d'oeuvres, and then [zoomed in on] individual tables, at which Jews sat greedily devouring the sumptuous dishes. They panned the crowded room, and [then focused on] individual women, who were directed to hitch their skirts up high. Thus arose a scene of carousing Jews; Jews eating sardines out of the can with their fingers; Jews fondling, under the table, the bare calves of their female drinking companions; Jews tossing half-eaten goose drumsticks beneath their tables. Cut out of the film were the women who fainted and the bruised faces of

those who were lashed with riding-whips for failing to play their parts properly. The same thing happened in the popular restaurant Adasia on Leszno, in the "art" bar Under the Fountain, and in a pastry shop where a thousand pastries were consumed in fifteen minutes. Then it was the turn of the /69/ outdoor cafes. In the Sztuka cafe, they filmed performances by stage artists who were accompanied by an orchestra specially enlarged for the occasion; the guests were ordered to dance, and a chance pair was made to kiss and embrace while dancing. And so it went: each day a different restaurant or cafe received instructions for the following day. The Artists' Garden was the only major cafe to remain unscathed, thanks only to a fortuitous circumstance. Just like the others, Julian had received orders to have an expanded orchestra, drinks and pastries ready for the next day. At the designated time the familiar green automobile drove up, just as Julian was about to go out and try to hurry along the delivery of the pastries. He ran into the Germans on his way out the door; he was wearing his cap and police armband. When the director of the film crew saw that Julian was an officer in the SP, he changed his mind. This fact was widely commented on by the public at large.

In the Casanova, they set up roulette-wheels and filmed people nonchalantly throwing 500-zloty notes down on the green table. They filmed a pair of scripted scenes in the street: a dapper gentleman belaboring a woman with his cane;

and a stout Jew with a cigar in his mouth as he crossed a street in the company of some rouge-cheeked women, who were smoking cigarettes and who had on dresses provocatively -- and hastily -- cut low in front. With this they concluded the film of life in the Warsaw ghetto.

A few days went by quite peacefully, apart from the fact that the round-ups for the labor-camps intensified. The SP had once again received strict orders, but the raids took place only during the daytime. Jews on foot got used to having to show their identification papers constantly to police patrols; they no longer tried to run away, as they had done at the beginning of the year. Sick of the constant harassment, Jews who lacked the necessary papers put up no resistance when they were led away to the district station-house, where the work-details were assembled, /70/ and from there to the *Arbeitsamt*. Once again a few letters, upbeat in tone, came from the laborers at the camps. The round-ups no longer made any impression on those Jews who had the security of a suitable job, nor on those subject to being shipped off to the camps. The residents of the ghetto had come to resemble the inhabitants of regions often visited by earthquakes, or where a nearby volcano might erupt at any time. Every ordinary Jew knew that the SS was in Warsaw. Except for the inspection-tours by the civilians in the rickshaws, they were not showing themselves by day so far. On the other hand, the nights -- starting in mid-July -- were laced with terror.

The first victims were among the tenants of the residential Hotel Britannia on Nowolipie. A small number of vacant rooms were reserved for traveling members of the Judenräte of neighboring ghettos that were still in touch with Warsaw. The rest were occupied by permanent residents, chiefly well-to-do people who could afford the amenities and the service. In the cellar there was a nightclub, the Casanova, which was the only establishment in the ghetto permitted to operate a dance-floor and a night-time gambling hall. The nightspot was hugely successful; it had its regulars from among the residents of the hotel, Jews in the employ of the Gestapo, and young women of easy virtue.

It was a white night in July when a large Mercedes came to a stop in front of the hotel entrance and six SS-men got out, the seventh remaining with the vehicle. The doorman opened the gate, and the six Germans with death's heads on their caps sauntered into the hotel and sat down in the plush chairs. The night doorman stood waiting for orders. "Wake up all the residents. The residents are to go out into the corridors. Each floor will go to out into its own corridor." These three sentences were spoken slowly /71/, almost in a whisper, by one of the Germans. The doorman understood and turned pale; he was horror-struck by the hushed tones of the tall, elegant German with the monocle in one eye. He was terrified by this encounter -- the first in his life -- with a German who conducted himself so quietly and placidly. Germans always shouted, trying to intimidate people in this

fashion. These Germans struck fear in a person with their whispering. A rumbling sound filled the air as long lines of men, women and children, half-dressed, in pajamas or in bathrobes hastily thrown on, snaked down the corridors.

The Germans sat lifelessly, frozen in poses of lazy immobility. From time to time they glanced with expressionless eyes at the people rushing aimlessly about. "All set. The tenants are all out in the corridors," the doorman reported. With measured strides, they went up to the top floor, where they started checking identification papers. The tall German with the monocle pulled out a sheet of paper densely covered with writing. While the others inspected papers, calling out first and last names, the tall one with the monocle stood holding the sheet of paper at the head of the stairs, at the point that divided the corridor in half. When the name "Natan Berensztejn" was called out, three words fell from the German's thin lips: "*Du bist mein.*" Berensztejn, motioned towards the stairs, went and stood there white as a ghost. The names kept on coming, more and more often interrupted by the ominous words, "*Du bist mein.*" A few hundred people were standing about on all the floors of the hotel, yet it was as quiet as if the hotel were fast asleep. Every few minutes, "*Du bist mein,*" though spoken almost in a whisper, was audible from the fifth floor right down to the ground floor. They took eight people -- seven men and one woman -- along with them to the next floor down. Fourteen men were taken from the third floor. The

tension rose with each passing minute. Their hands trembling, they presented their documents; they swooned with fear that the voice by the staircase would sound out after their names were called. A cold, mortal sweat of relief would break out on their ashen faces if the German returned their papers. "*Du bist mein*": forty-five times the impassive, as it were rock-hewn /72/ face with the monocle whispered, "*Du bist mein*." Seven additional persons were detained for not having any papers. The rest went back to their rooms after their papers had been checked. Women and children threw themselves sobbing onto the shoulders of the men. The lights were turned off. In a hundred rooms hearts pounded with emotion as the Mercedes drove into the hotel courtyard. The driver maneuvered the car, casting the headlight beams this way and that. Fifty-two people stood in the lobby, expecting the worst. Seized by fear, they went over in their minds, futilely, all of their recent transgressions. In vain they sought the reasons for which they now stood here under the gaze of these ever-silent Germans. From the cellar came the sounds of jazz, interspersed with the noise coming from the automobile as it turned around; then the incessant, muffled sound of sobbing could be heard from behind the closed doors of the apartments. Natan Berensztejn, the first person to be called out, got the hiccoughs as they were led out into the courtyard illuminated by the automobile's headlights. The oblong parking lot had one blind, windowless wall adjoining

the building next door. It was overgrown with a tall grapevine. The two beams of the bright headlights were pointed at this wall. Dewdrops glistened on the lush greenery; the billowing foliage rustled, casting distinct shadows: the wall seemed to be alive. They led them out and placed them in a single line. For a long moment they stood that way, breathing heavily, their mouths gaping open; with wide-open eyes dazzled by the headlights, they made futile efforts to penetrate the gloom beyond the cone of light. The motor roared as it started up, emitting an ominous rumble like a drumroll of death. They stood bunched up against one another; through his clothes, each could feel nothing but his neighbor's arms trembling with fear <? **wystraszone jedynie dresz^{em} trwogi**>. Concealed behind the curtains in the windows of the hotel stood the relatives of the fifty-two criminals. /73/ The whole thing lasted less than a minute, just long enough for the frantic minds of those standing against the wall and watching from the windows to retrace the paths of their entire lives. There was a burst of machine-gun fire, a barely audible clattering. The wild grapevine undulated, the line of people against the wall stiffened, swayed and gave way. Some fell down dead like statues knocked from their pedestals, others first went down on their knees and then slowly lowered their heads marked with a bloody spot, or fell as if flung down onto the ground, there to writhe in a frenzy of dying.

The execution of fifty-two people whose names meant nothing, who had not been involved in anything, who had not conducted any illegal business, and who could not be accused of violating any of the applicable German regulations as they were understood, roiled public opinion in the ghetto. They racked their brains in search of an explanation; they delved into the victims' family life, questioned their neighbors, studied their financial circumstances, their activities both before and during the war, their professions, their mode of living. By evening it was established that the victims had been generally well-to-do, had led sedate and irreproachable lives, and had not had the slightest contact with anyone engaged in shady activities. The public consoled itself with the fact that those shot had been on a list, hence it was not inconceivable that the authorities had their reasons, of which the general public was unaware.

But the next few nights put an end to all such sophistry and logical gymnastics. On the second night, the victims of the *Vernichtungskommando* were the two Gestapo agents, Mendel and attorney Lewin (the minions of Szternfeld and Gancwajch), the wealthy baker Wilner and his son, and sixteen others whose names were obscure. Mendel was led out of his apartment and killed in front of the building he lived in on the corner of Leszno and Solna. Attorney Lewin was killed in his apartment, also by a shot to the back of the head; in this same apartment on the fourth floor, a sixty-year-old man, the owner of the apartment, was thrown out of the

window. On their way down the stairs, they killed /74/ a young man who happened to be returning home from a visit to neighbors. Wilner and his son were also killed in their apartment, right before the eyes of their entire family. As they left Wilner's lodgings, the Germans heard the sounds of a gramophone emanating from the apartment next door. There they found a gathering composed of twelve men of various ages and a few women. They shot ten, and pushed two others who fought back out of the window. These landed almost at the feet of the driver of the police car. They were still alive. The driver phlegmatically drew out his revolver and released the safety; two more shots banged out dryly, and the green Mercedes departed from the ghetto.

On the third night they killed fifty-nine people. Among the those killed there was only one well-known name, that of Welek Szymonowicz, formerly of "No. 13," who had of late amassed a large fortune as a scrap-iron dealer.⁴ Thirty-nine individuals were shot from a list; the rest were tenants who happened to live in the same or adjacent buildings.

Thus, every night, they shot several dozen persons. Each night they would kill a couple of "Gestapo men," a few dozen people named on a list, and a few dozen others selected at random. They killed them in their apartments, threw them out of windows, or dragged them out and executed them in

⁴ Other sources give the date of Szymonowicz's death (along with those of his associates in "13" referred to here as Lewin and Mendel) as May 23, 1942. See Abraham Lewin, *A Cup of Tears* (New York, Blackwell, 1989), p. 95, and Adam Czerniakow, *Warsaw Diary*, p. 358. Lewin (pp. 106-107) also gives a different date, May 29, 1942, for the death of Wilner.

front of the building. Often they took their victims away with them, loading them into a truck and, once the truck was full, driving to some square or little park where they would execute them en masse. Each night, several dozen Jews perished, murdered with cold-blooded sadism. Each evening as darkness fell, the ghastly fear of death would descend upon the ghetto. The days passed calmly. The responsible ghetto authorities said nothing; the councilmen were as silent as the grave, and the all-knowing Jews who collaborated with the Gestapo kept quiet as well. The prevailing view was that the Lublin Gestapo was conducting a purge in the ghetto. They slandered their victims, saying that they had belonged to the Communist party /75/ before the war, or that this or that person read an underground newspaper, engaged in currency speculations, or smuggled goods to the Aryan side. The days passed peacefully, but there was less traffic in the streets. Restaurants and cafes stood half-empty. No one wanted to call attention to himself; everyone kept his voice down. Well-off Jews feared they would be informed on, and did not trust family or friends. The round-ups intensified; the daily quota was about three thousand men. The SP delivered the number stipulated. When there were not enough unemployed Jews, the patrols brought in men with work documents, and the district commanders looked the other way. The Arbeitsamt accepted them and shipped them off. The work documents had ceased to be any kind of protection. The Council had a difficult task to perform. The administration of the SP,

together with the district commanders, supplied their quotas of workers, and each patrol had to look sharp, during these times of lawlessness and stalking death, if they wanted to hang on to their badges and police caps, which shielded them and their entire families.

The disinfection campaign was discontinued. Once again the Health Department suspended its activities. The men of Szmerling's company were transferred back to street-duty to conduct round-ups.

At twelve noon on July 22, Dr. Sztejnalk, an elderly pediatrician, was walking down Karmelicka Street. He was in a hurry to drop by his office, where his little patients were waiting for him. He was in a hurry, but there was no way he could clear a path for himself through the crush in the crowded street... Right behind him followed two men without armbands. They were particularly interested in the tall nervous Jew, carrying a little bag and fidgeting to left and right. They fell into step behind him. Dr. Sztajnalk elbowed his way forward /76/, hurrying along, raising his hat and replacing it, using it to fan his ruddy face; a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles with thick lenses was perched on his fleshy nose. Just as he was considering whether little Judytko would need an operation, and whether he had been right to tell her to wait a bit, he suddenly received a kick, a powerful kick, in the back. "Germans!" he thought. He instinctively turned around and, seeing a man in civilian

clothes, called out, "Why do you kick me?" These were the last words he ever spoke, for the next moment the smiling German's companion shoved him so hard that he fell backward against a wall. The bag dropped out of his hand, his hat fell off his head, and his glasses dangled from one ear. Bracing himself against the wall with his hands, he was trying to regain his balance, his blue eyes blinking myopically, when from five centimeters away a shot was fired. The civilians got into a rickshaw, which turned in the direction of the checkpoint. The gendarmes snapped to attention.⁵

In the courtyard of the Health Department, the Anti-Epidemic Company stood in dressed ranks. The heads of the SP officers were turned towards the Company's director, Szmerling. He took the roll-call list, checked it over, and meticulously, as always, jotted down the badge numbers of those absent in his black notebook. For a long time he ran his eyes over the straight rows of young men; searching for something, he examined each figure separately. "Any of you men with a close family member or other relative, or a friend, who is in Central Detention, please step forward." There was a long pause, during which the assembled company stood motionless. The order was clear, but alarming. Then, one after another, gaps began to appear in the ranks. Every

⁵ Other contemporary sources confirm this episode, but assign it to July 21, 1942. See Lewin, *A Cup of Tears*, pp. 267-68, note 140 (by Antony Polonsky, who gives the pediatrician's name as Dr. Zygmunt Steinkalk).

moment another officer took three steps forward. Lieutenant Commander Szmerling reviewed the ranks one more time, snaring two additional men. They had not come forward, but /77/ the father of one and the sister of the other were known to be in detention. They had held back, as it were overcome by foreboding. After a list was made of their names and badge numbers, Szmerling assigned the men [who had stepped forward] to guard posts inside the Health Department, in front of the gate, inside the gate, in the courtyard, before the entrance to HQ, and by the telephone <switchboard?>. To each previously non-existent duty-station he detailed two men, with a stern warning as to what awaited them if they quit their posts. "Gentlemen, I call your attention to the fact that the duty-stations will be personally inspected." Whereupon he took the <rest of> the men in the Company and, placing himself at their head, led them out into the street. They marched down Leszno to Karmelicka, turned into Mylna and proceeded to the Artists' Garden, when Julian Traube was expecting them -- Szmerling having told him in confidence, the day before, that he wanted to hold a short briefing on the premises of the cafe.

"Boys," he began (it was the first time he had ever addressed them so familiarly), "our Company has received an order on which a great deal may be riding. I have been given to understand that the manner in which you perform your difficult task today will be watched by the Jewish Council and, more to the point, by the German authorities. In

carrying out our assignment, we will have to operate independently and with efficiency. Our conduct will determine whether the authorities become involved, or whether we can manage on our own. Headquarters lays particular emphasis on the need for you to accomplish this difficult assignment yourselves, for your own good and that of the Community.

"In half an hour, Central Detention on Gesia Street is to be liquidated. The task of our Company is to pick up the prisoners and deliver them in groups to the siding at the trans-shipment yard, the so-called *Umschlagplatz*, which is located at No. 5 Dzika Street, near the checkpoint. I will do everything in my power to make the task easier for you. Pay careful attention to each order from your squad leaders, and try to conduct yourselves calmly and with discipline. You are to assume an energetic attitude, which will have to make up for the weapons /78/ that you lack. Try to see to it that no one gets away from you. Do not let yourselves be tempted by offers of money of any kind. Remember: the escape of a single prisoner might result in the whole group, or the greater part of it, running away. You were selected for this dolorous task in view of the proficiency you have acquired in escorting people to the compulsory baths. You will have to be doubly vigilant in guarding those you will be escorting today, because they are desperate people who don't know where they are being taken.

"For your security and the good of your colleagues who have relatives in detention, I have taken them off duty today. I hope that I have succeeded in fooling them, but in the event that they should somehow get wind of things and show up at the prison, you are to keep an eye on them and report to me immediately."

<THE NEXT PARAGRAPH APPEARS TO BE OUT OF PLACE. ---JW.>

For a couple of days there had been reports that the SP was to be quartered in barracks in a single block of buildings. These reports were now confirmed, when forms were passed out for the patrolmen to complete. They were to fill in the blanks [with information relating to] their marital status and the number of immediate family members who lived together with them. Almost all of the unmarried policemen gave their status as married, writing in the names of their fiancées, or of women friends. Under the heading, "First Name and Maiden Name of Wife," Julian wrote "Irena Traube née Miler."

He was finished. He mopped his forehead with an enormous white handkerchief and stroked the beard that he had recently started. He glanced at his watch: "In fifteen minutes we will be setting out. I ask you, gentlemen, to stay put. Mr. Traube, could you perhaps offer us some coffee?" Julian barely grasped that Szmerling was speaking to him. He gave the necessary instructions in the kitchen.

/79/ The cafe had been largely deserted for the past couple of days, even in spite of the sweltering heat. The

only ones to show up for work were the cashier, the doorman, and two waitresses, Irena and Basia, Julian's sister. "I'll treat everyone to coffee, but, gentlemen, please help yourselves in the kitchen, since I'm a little shorthanded and don't have the time to spare." For the past half-hour his thoughts had been circling round and round a single sentence, which he kept repeating to himself incessantly: "Genia Braun is in detention and I have to save her. Genia Braun is in detention. What can I do?" At last he came to a decision and with a nod called over the doorman's son, a quick-witted twelve-year-old boy. He tore a page out of his notebook and wrote on it: "I will be standing by the gate to your left. Run straight at me as hard as you can <do bramy vis-à-vis>." "Listen carefully, Aleks. Take a rickshaw, pay the man double and tell him to go as fast as he can to the Central Detention. Give this sheet of paper to the policeman on duty at the gate and ask him to hand it to Miss Braun in Cell 12. Got it?" The boy's big eyes flashed with comprehension, and he darted for the exit.

Julian marched at the head of his squad, full of anxiety and doubtful whether he had done the right thing. Might the note not fall into the wrong hands? Would it be delivered in time? They arrived at their destination. In front of the prison the regular guards were on patrol. Szmernling had the men form up facing the prison. He himself went inside and emerged a moment later with the prison director, Lindenfeld and Lieutenant Commander Rudnicki<?>. They held a brief

conference, after which the judge went back inside the prison. Szmerling issued an order: "All squad leaders report to me." He took the twelve squad leaders and stood with them by the wall. "Gentlemen, your attention. The Gestapo will be arriving in a moment. Commander Lejkin is inside. It will be your job to keep the people under tight control. Right now I can't give you any further orders, as they will depend on how the situation develops. Prior to each order, I will give a /80/ a short blast on my whistle. Squad I, Karmiol [in charge], will cordon off Lubeckiego Street; Squad II, Rozenberg, will cordon off Gęsia Street starting at Lubeckiego. In addition, Squad II has the task of halting vehicular traffic immediately after the cordon-lines are in place. Vehicles are to be allowed to pass until the first groups of prisoners are brought out. Squad III, Weiser, will extend the cordon past Zamenhof Street and immediately close the street to vehicular traffic, letting through only the specially-reserved trucks and empty *kohnhellerki*. Squad IV, Lewin, will escort the prison vans; Squad V <i gr?> will escort prisoners on foot; Squad VI <gr.....?> will escort vans; Squad <VIII?> <gr> will also escort vans. Squad IX will escort vans or prisoners on foot as ordered. Squads <X?> and XI will be held in reserve, and Squad XII, Traube, will form cordon-lines on both sides of the prison gates.

"The director of the prison will assemble homogeneous parties of prisoners, that is, separate groups of children;

women; poor, weak and elderly men; and healthy young and strong men. You are to deal with each group in an individual manner. Dismissed."

The designated groups had barely managed to close off the street before the news about the prison had spread all over town. Throngs of relatives, drawn by the terrible news, pressed against the SP cordon-lines along Lubeckiego and Gęsia streets. Within minutes the balconies and rooftops were filled with people wanting to catch a glimpse, if only from a distance, of their fathers, sisters and children.

From beyond the prison walls could be heard shouting in individual cells, feeble at first and then louder and spreading from cell to cell. The entire prison let out a plaintive howl -- the cries of those who stubbornly refused to leave their cells. The volume of shouting swelled until it could be heard just beyond the still-closed gates, towards which all eyes were turned. The SP cordon-lines froze in their places. A barely audible murmuring came from the crowds pressing up against them. There was a rattling of bolts and clanking of chains, and at the very same moment two green cars drove up, /81/ full of Germans armed with machine-guns. They roared up and ground to a halt 300 meters from the prison. The prison gates banged open, and the first group of prisoners poured out: children, emaciated and in rags, through which their bare skin showed. They came out of the prison into the sun-washed street, where they obstinately took the smallest steps they could so as to journey down

their unknown route as slowly as possible. Tears welled up in their eyes; they held their arms, which resembled matchsticks covered with yellow skin, up to their faces. They saw the street, deserted and empty, and the policemen lining it on both sides.

From some balcony or rooftop beyond the cordon-line, someone's name was called out in a voice like that of a wounded bird. A child began to cry and answered, holding up its bare little arms: "Mama!" Others joined in. A cry of despair rose to heaven. The gate kept on disgorging more and more of the little inmates. Mothers and fathers recognized their children, or thought they did. The SP smartly threw a ring of officers around the trucks. The gates closed, and the prison got a new group ready. To the children, every face beyond the cordon-line was their mother; to the fathers and mothers, each little one loaded onto the van was their child.

A moment later the gates opened again. This time it was men: the poor, the aged and the infirm. They walked quietly along, stupefied in the midst of the silence that now reigned. No one called out; there was no communication between them and the people beyond the police lines. The SP officers formed a ring around them and, taking them by the hand, led them away on foot. In one of the German cars, an SS man sat perched high on the back of a seat and watched the proceedings through opera-glasses. Next came another group of juveniles, all boys fourteen or fifteen years old. Once

again there was a shriek of despair from beyond the cordon-line, and shouting from the youthful prisoners. They made attempts to escape, and truncheons were brought out. The whole group scattered /82/ about the empty street and pushed up against the police lines. The diminutive Lejkin rushed out of the prison, lashing out a series of curt orders. Amazingly enough, his voice could be heard soaring above the clamor of a couple of thousand people. The cordon-line held. A shot rang out from the German car. The situation was brought under control. From someone came the order: "Speed it up!" The gates opened again and again. They were bringing out some young women. Julian was standing right beside the gates. "I won't be able to save her," he thought. "Genia's not in this group." The operation was beginning to move at an alarming rate. Szmerling ran up to Lejkin: "There's nothing I can do. I've been ordered to finish up within an hour." Now the gates stayed open all the time, and group after group came out. Groups of men, groups of women, groups on foot and groups loaded onto trucks. There were now a dozen streetcars assembled outside the police lines. The crowd continued to swell <i krzyki nieprzerwanej, jednostajnej stale rosnącej ulicy?>. Julian kept a close eye out for Genia. His weary brain was playing tricks on him; he saw her [features] in every face. Before his eyes passed faces and hundreds of eyes, eyes trembling with tears; bowed, unresisting heads <i szyje pełne krzyku?>. All of a sudden he felt a powerful shove. Someone had fallen into his arms:

Genia. Instantly <he gave?> her a shove back, and she nearly fell down. She ran inside the archway of the gate. "Run faster, he's chasing you," Julian shouted after her. An SP officer stood before the gate barring her way. Julian pushed them inside the archway where they both fell down. There was a brief tussle; he got Genia free. She ran away in the direction of Sienna <sic! Smocza?>.

"No need to worry, sir, I take full responsibility," said Julian, trying to make excuses. "That was my sister," he lied. On his way past the gates he had run into Szmerling. "Where is the woman /83/ you were chasing? She got away? Mr. Traube, I hope this is on the up and up. I believe the gentleman with the opera-glasses didn't notice. Just in case, I'm taking down your badge number." Julian returned to his post before the prison gates. The wailing from the prisoners who were led out became, if anything, even louder. New groups were constantly being brought forth, and each one let out another collective shriek of despair. Another group of children came out, and a group of women -- old, worn-out, barely covered -- followed by some elegantly dressed young women with pallid faces and bent shoulders convulsed by sobbing. This was the final group. The gates were being shut. Was that it? Impossible: from inside the prison one could still hear shouting; orders were still flying. This went on for a dozen minutes or so, and then the last group was led out. For them the SP reinforced the cordon-lines; the gates, which by now were closed, were under

heavy guard. There was total silence for a moment. When everything was ready, <Szmerling gave the signal.> The gates opened, and out came the most dangerous prisoners: the healthy strong young men. They strode with even, almost military, steps. Keeping calm, they neither wept nor called out; in response to the desperate cries from the other side of the cordon-lines their eyes suddenly grew dim and their heads drooped. The SP officers locked arms tightly together to form a double ring around them. The bolts rattled as the prison gates began to close. The officers in the SP cordon-lines moved as a body to escort the group to the *Umschlag*. The dangerous party was escorted to where the previous groups had already been loaded into boxcars, thirty to a car. The boxcars were shut and sealed with lead. From the tiny windows covered with barbed wire came the sound of screaming and groans. /84/ A woman's hand, white and delicate, waved a farewell to the torturers. "Der 'Balbo' arbeitet gut." From the Germans Szmerling received praise, the new sobriquet "Balbo" and a promotion in the form of a second star.

At this very moment, three gentlemen entered the office of the president of the Council: Major SS Höfle, commander of the *Vernichtungskommando* that had arrived in Warsaw, *Untersturmführer* SS Brandt, the chief administrator for Jewish affairs in Warsaw, and *Oberscharführer* Mende. The president rose from his chair, and they each shook hands with him in turn. They sat down in the unoccupied plush chairs.

With a gracious gesture Brandt gave the president leave to take his seat. For a moment silence reigned undisturbed; the July sun, shining through the stained-glass windows, cast a rainbow of color onto the walls of the office. During the long interval the three SS men studied Czerniaków's face. Brandt metronomically rocked one gleaming boot back and forth while tapping a rolled-up piece of white paper in the same tempo. The president sat stock-still. The mind hidden behind his high forehead was working feverishly. He was unsettled by this visit, by the exaggerated courtesy /85/ and the calmly urbane gestures of his "guests." The silence was broken by the somewhat husky voice of Brandt. "The Warsaw ghetto is overpopulated," he said, pronouncing each word slowly and distinctly. "Only an insignificant part [of the population] works in the shops to produce goods needed by the military. The rest" -- he paused a moment, as if searching for the right way to put it -- "do nothing: they loaf around, deal in prohibited goods, engage in currency speculation or do nothing at all. It is crowded in the Warsaw ghetto -- even the streets are overpopulated. Typhus has been raging for two years. The epidemic, in spite of the remedial measures that have been taken, is constantly on the rise. Smuggling, in spite of the strict measures that have been adopted, is constantly on the rise. In the stores they sell produce not grown in the ghetto. A huge percentage of Jews receives benefits from your relief agencies; they live at the expense of the *Judenrat*, and the *Judenrat* has no

money." The words came more and more slowly. Czerniaków sat motionless, hypnotized by the very sound of the slowly drawled words. "To everything I have mentioned there is one solution, a solution advantageous to the *Judenrat* and to the Jews: resettlement." The president's powerful frame withstood the terrible blow manfully. Only there, [hidden] inside him, did his heart freeze for a moment. "It is necessary to resettle the unproductive element, the harmful element that lives at the expense of others. We will relocate them to the east, where they will be put to work. To this end..." -- he again paused to consider -- "you will sign this paper for us." He leaned forward and with a leisurely movement laid on the table a Gestapo memorandum covered with writing. He uncapped a fountain pen and proffered it, after first turning the steel nib towards himself. Czerniaków took the paper and the pen. Something inside him was screaming, "Don't give in! Hold out at all costs!" "Blasted heart, the way it's pounding. I have to say something now." He gave a deep sigh, drew a breath and let it out again; he seemed quite calm to himself. "Gentlemen, with your indulgence, I will read /86/ this document before I sign it." Major Höfle stirred impatiently at the delay. Brandt, who had known this Jew for two years, nodded affirmatively and sank back into the depths of his chair.

The letters swam before the president's eyes. "The *Judenrat's* affairs are in parlous condition." He opened his

eyes wide; phrases and sentences leapt from the page.

"Therefore the Jewish Council in Warsaw appeals to the authorities, respectfully requesting the resettlement..."

"Blasted heart, the way it's pounding." With almost all of his strength he pressed the spot where his brimming, tormented heart was hammering. "...the resettlement of a part of the Jews, whom the Jewish Council is unable to support. --*Obmann des Judenrates im Warschau Dipl. Ing. Adam Czerniakow.*"

He pretended for a moment that he was still reading. He wanted to shut his eyelids -- which were dry and feverish all of a sudden -- for a moment. He mastered himself. He knew that three pairs of eyes were fixed on him. He was still clutching the scorching pen in his fingers. He pushed the paper away. "Gentlemen, permit me..." The three gentlemen, at the same time, made as if to lunge at him. He understood. "I ask you for half an hour's time. During the half-hour I will send you the signed petition." They went out without looking at him. Councilmen, their curiosity aroused, and his deputy, Lichtenbaum, started to enter the office.

"Gentlemen, if you please. Give me half an hour to be alone." The president's face was drained of blood, gray, ashen. They reluctantly obeyed. After half an hour the perplexed councilmen peeked into the room. The president's face was pale, but smiling -- the liberated smile of death. The president had poisoned himself with a little draft of potassium cyanide. The ardent heart of engineer Adam

Czerniaków, president of the largest Jewish community in Europe, had stopped beating.

/87/ The president had not signed. Others were found: Szeryński signed as director of the SP (he was released from prison for this purpose); engineer Lichtenbaum, vice president of the Council signed, as did a couple of councilmembers. The resettlement had become a *fait accompli*. The Council had all but ceased to exist, or existed in name only. Power in the ghetto was assumed by the SP. No one in the ghetto had an answer to the question: how long would the expulsions go on? How many people did the Germans intend to "resettle"? The day after the expulsion of the prisoners in Central Detention, the campaign to expel the poor from the relief-shelters and the beggars from the streets commenced. The SP threw cordons around the buildings that housed shelters, and loaded [their inmates] onto wagons, trucks and streetcars requisitioned for this purpose. The indigent Jews were no longer able to walk. The elderly, those who were crippled or sick, and children were carried out on stretchers. They took with them all their worldly possessions: a red cushion or a quilt, from which the down spilled out. Down drifted through the air, carried away on gusts of wind; patches of white marked the path to the *Umschlagplatz* and its cargo of human misery. In each wagon rode one or two policemen, a sufficient escort for people in whom life barely throbbed; it was too much of an effort for them to escape from the wagon. Besides, what did they have

to escape for? To go back to a shelter, or to their spot against a wall? Gaunt horses slowly dragged the overloaded wagons, from which there rarely came any sound of weeping. Sometimes emaciated hands would stretch forth from a wagon towards those on the street, and a voice would cry out: "Give a piece of bread for the road!" This was not a request but a parting demand for bread addressed to those who were left behind. From all parts of the ghetto the wagons rolled towards Zamenhof Street in the direction of the *Umschlagplatz*. They passed the sentries at Checkpoint V. A sharp right turn towards the wall, which ran a few meters from /88/ the sidewalk. Then a left turn, where the buildings of the *Transferstelle* were located; the wall ran a hundred meters from the checkpoint of the <main?> ghetto towards the <little?> ghetto, bent at a right angle and linked up with two enormous modern buildings, which had housed public schools before the war. These two buildings, with their beautiful rooms and modern wide windows, were adjoined by a small and hideous structure, a municipal bathhouse, and another gate, which led to the extensive grounds of the trans-shipping yard. Ever since the ghetto had been walled in, the bathhouse had been situated outside of it, and constituted no-man's land.

These two huge buildings with their spacious courtyards separated by a wall from the trans-shipping yard; the bathhouse; the plaza located in front of the buildings; and the gate leading to the rail siding constituted a zone laid

out, so it would seem, by the hand of an architectural genius: Satan. A wagon would come to a stop. Sanitary units from the Health Department would set up portable steps against the front of each arriving wagon. The poor in all their noisome gaudy variety gradually filled up the *Umschlagplatz*. This was the area in which all the Jews were collected; the actual trans-shipping yard was surrounded by its own wall, built before the war. The yard was reached by means of two entrance gates, one on Dzika Street, the other on Niska. Next to the latter stood the bathhouse, a pre-war municipal facility employed, after the ghetto was set up, for mandatory communal bathing. Extending beyond the bathhouse were the two modern former school buildings, which had housed the quarantine facility but which now stood vacant. In addition to their beautiful and spacious rooms and broad windows, the two enormous buildings had a pair of communicating courtyards that adjoined the fence of the trans-shipping yard *per se*.

/89/ No-man's land up to now, these grounds laid out as it were by Satan's architectural genius acquired the name *Umschlagplatz*. Later, as the word came to be repeated over and over with agonizing despair by those who remained behind when their loved ones were taken away, the shortened form *Umschlag* took hold. In the city people went about their business as usual; to all appearances life was going on normally. The owners of cafes and restaurants closed their deserted establishments; there were no customers. Small

patrols of policemen swept up beggars from the streets and loaded them onto wagons, which followed slowly behind. An uninterrupted line of wagons stretched to the *Umschlag*, where they drove up to the circular plaza in front of the buildings. By order of the authorities, District Commander Mieczysław Szmerling was put in charge of the plaza. He chose a team of five SP officers who had served in Pepid. The Health Department supplied units whose assignment was to unload the wagons and put the deportees in the buildings to await the next stage of their journey -- the cattle-cars. Thirty SP officers were assigned to guard the deportees and keep order in the plaza. Two additional officers had to keep a count as the transports arrived. Towards evening a green Mercedes drove into the plaza. With a shout of "Balbo!" Mende summoned Szmerling, who reported [a total of] four thousand, two hundred persons. The second day of the *Aktion* was over.

On the third day, the entire corps of the SP was assembled at headquarters. The time was 4:30 AM: curfew. The ghetto was still asleep. Lejkin took the roll-call. Szeryński was at a briefing in his office, which had been taken over by the Germans. Lejkin divided the men up into squads, platoons, and companies, and designated their commanding officers. The commanders were given their instructions. Approximately two thousand policemen hit the streets. The squads, platoons and companies split up and headed off in different directions. Each unit was followed

by /90/ empty wagons and streetcars. Each unit had its designated sector: whole blocks, streets, and individual apartment buildings. All over the ghetto the courtyards of targeted buildings echoed with the voices of SP officers shouting, "Everyone downstairs!" They came down, trembling and scared out of their wits, with their papers in their hands. Family members clung tightly to each other. The officers in charge checked documents; orders were to send all the unemployed to the *Umschlag*. The selection process went slowly. Candidates for the *Umschlag* fled to cellars and rooftops; the SP men listlessly chased them from the buildings. A handful of old cripples and a few orphaned children were loaded onto the wagons. The SP men did their work languidly and with reluctance. The wagons arrived at the *Umschlag* less frequently than they had the preceding day. As the escorts returned to town, Szmerling tried to spur them on. He was under orders to report the number of people brought in every half-hour. The situation was unsatisfactory, highly unsatisfactory. His reports also went to SP headquarters. Lejkin despatched bicycle couriers. It was no use: the individual squad leaders were unable to inspire their men, who worked sluggishly and grudgingly. At four o'clock Szmerling presented his report to the interior of the green Mercedes: 1580 persons. The doors swung open, and Michelson<?>, Handtke, Witossek<?>, Miretschko, Mende and Brandt noisily got out. Michelson and Brandt placed a call to the wicket by the unused entrance-gate leading to the

trans-shipping yard. The four remaining SS men walked towards the plaza in front of the school buildings. From all of the windows gazed tired and apathetic faces, frightened faces, faces choked with sobbing. On the sidewalk next to the buildings sat -- on red cushions and tiny bundles, or on bare and <dirty> rocks -- gray-bearded old men, old women with their wigs askew, and several hideously bloated corpses. The Germans silently went around the plaza and passed on to the courtyard where /91/ the same poverty crouched, the same spectacle spread [before their eyes] against the backdrop of the handsome modern buildings. "Everyone downstairs!" Fifteen armed Ukrainians appeared in the plaza. Led by two commanders, they rushed towards the buildings. Shots rang out, and there was screaming and weeping from the poor wretches who were clubbed with rifle-butts. Through the open gates leading to the *Umschlagplatz* a reeling column of live corpses plodded along, dragging the red bags of their feather-beds. The route to the boxcars led across a broad expanse of pavement between a grass-covered square and beds of cornflowers towards a wide gap in the wall. A few dozen meters to the left was the actual gate, currently in use, to the trans-shipping yard. Beyond the wall was an enormous yard, the site of some immense buildings and separate spur lines. The trunk line began on the other side of this yard. Two hundred policeman, stationed every few <hundred??> meters, lined the route to the trains. The cattle-cars had no steps. Policemen were assigned by Lejkin, two to a car,

with orders to keep count. Each car was to be filled with one hundred persons. In just under an hour, sixty boxcars were loaded, to the accompaniment of the cries of those who were beaten and the wailing of mothers who had gotten separated from their children. The doors -- the rectangular throats of the groaning freightcars -- creaked shut and were bolted. There was a gnashing of chains, and the cars began to move. Through the barbed-wire grating of a tiny window came one last cry of despair from the tightly packed people. The train headed into the unknown. In the opposite direction moved the squad of fifteen armed Ukrainians, with their commander, and the two hundred SP officers, led by Lejkin. The crew was done for the day.

That same day at five o'clock, the ghetto heard stunning news, passed by word of mouth. The resettlement operation was over. The deportation /92/ raids had ceased. In the street total strangers embraced each other, in the courtyards of all the apartment buildings the caretakers shouted the joyful news to the tenants: "The Aktion is over! No more resettlement!" Who was the first to say this? Who was that fool, that tasteless comedian, that madman? Whoever he was, heaven is his due for the few minutes of joy he gave to half a million of the condemned.

At the same time that the ghetto was rejoicing at the happy news, and pious Jews were raising prayers of thanksgiving to God for turning away the misfortune, *Untersturmführer* Orf gave an order on the *Umschlag*. Several

dozen Health Department officers were busy loading sick and crippled Jews into four streetcars. A fifth vehicle, Pinkiert's black hearse, made repeated trips to pick up the remains of the dead. When they were full, the streetcars left the *Umschlag*; two SP officers stood on the steps of each car blocking the doors. Orf rode on a bicycle. They passed out through the archway and drove down *Dzika* and *Okopowa* to the Jewish cemetery. The cemetery administration kept pits dug in readiness for mass graves. Into such a mass grave the gravediggers tossed one hundred forty-two people who were still alive. *Untersturmführer* Orf stood holding a revolver in his right hand and drumming rhythmically with his gloved left hand on the holster fastened to his belt. The gravediggers, their faces flushed and their eyes bulging, threw wide shovelfuls of dirt into the pit. As they heard the frantic screams, they felt for the first time that they would be unable to bear it. Each time they bent down towards the hole they felt dizzy. The horrible pit exerted a pull on them, it was trying to swallow them; louder and louder, the grave cried out with a ghastly tremulous voice. Those who were thrown in last /93/ shook off the shoveled dirt; they fell down, got up again, stepped on bodies and faces, knocked down their fellows, trod on their open screaming mouths, and trampled them down into the dirt falling in a thick rain from above. *Untersturmführer* Orf stood leaning slightly over the grave; his long pale bony face registered a look of boredom. "Lime!" he ordered at one point, addressing the director of

the cemetery who stood at his side. The gravediggers went on spreading heavy clumps of earth. A wheelbarrow full of lime rolled up. Orf gave the signal to the gravediggers: they scooped up shovelfuls of thick lime. Each shovelful was met by a scream -- an octave lower each time -- from the grave. Another dozen shovelfuls, and the screaming ceased altogether. The tangled bodies had fallen in a dense pack. One person, trying to get up again, made a dark clearing in the dense white mass. He fell, clapping in time to the applause of the shovels. Orf made a sign, ordering that no more lime be added. Clumps of heavy clayey dirt formed another layer on top of the lime. In the streets people embraced. The *Aktion* was over...

Thus ended the third day of resettlement.

Four AM. From SP headquarters there rushed forth out into the still sleeping city two thousand SP officers led by Szmerling and Lejkin, thirty-four so-called *junacy*,⁶ fifty Ukrainians, and two large green cars full of SS officers and non-coms. The operation encompassed the entire ghetto -- both the main ghetto and the little one. In the main part of the ghetto the Ukrainians and the *junacy*, assisted by SP officers, blocked off Nowolipie Street from Karmelicka to Smocza; Nowolipki from Karmelicka to Smocza; the Hotel Britan<n>ia, from which all of the residents -- with or without papers -- were sent to the *Umschlag*; Leszno from Karmelicka to Rymarska; and Gęsia between Zamenhof and

⁶ "Young labor volunteers."

Nalewki. In the little ghetto the whole of Twarda Street was sacked.

/94/ Operations in each of the above-named sectors were directed by one or two SS men armed with submachine-guns. Several platoons of SP officers carried out the raids in individual apartment buildings. At 7 AM the first groups, escorted by Ukrainians and *junacy*, began arriving at the *Umschlag*. There was a steady procession of new groups down the empty deserted streets lined with closed shops. Shots reverberated all over the ghetto.

By 4 PM about 8000 people had been brought to the *Umschlag*, of whom Brandt and Michelson, following a cursory selection, <sent home those who had??> work certificates. The rest were loaded into boxcars. The *Umschlag* emptied out again. Two streetcars went to the cemetery, this time under the supervision of *Oberscharführer* Handtke and five Ukrainians. At the edge of an open grave they shot sixty persons. The Ukrainians and *junacy* left the ghetto. A frightened crowd poured out into the streets to find out whom they had lost during the day. People moved from places still untouched to the buildings and apartments that had already been depopulated, on the theory that the raids seldom struck twice in the same spot. It was like this every day: thousands went to the *Umschlag*, thousands were ejected from their apartments. They would abandon all their possessions, leaving behind bedsheets that were still warm and, often, bowls of half-eaten soup. Hundreds of apartments were left

empty with clothes in the wardrobes and stocks of food in the pantries.

On the fifth day of the *Aktion*, the SP was reinforced by one hundred fifty officers of the Emergency Service. Sirota was, as before, nominally in charge, but real authority was exercised by some young men who worked for the Gestapo: Lolek Skosowski, Nobel and Dr. Sztorm. The latter two wore caps bearing the insignia of the Emergency Service. Skosowski had a most important task. He ran the organization /95/ out of philanthropic concern: the Emergency Service provided him with a means of protecting his relatives and friends, whose pleas for help became more and more insistent as the resettlement campaign progressed.

The junior officials of JOINT, TOZ, CENTOS, and the [other] institutions that, since America's entry into the war, had been united under the name *Jüdische Soziale Selbsthilfe*, announced that they were voluntarily joining <the *Aktion*>. SP headquarters, with the approval of the authorities, provided them with new white armbands labeled, in black, *Hilfskomitee*. In similar fashion, the director of the *Eildienst*, Umański, was assigned along with fifty of his couriers to help the SP. The Emergency Service and the three thousand volunteers assembled each morning in front of SP headquarters, whence they would march out into the city. Sometimes <they were accompanied by> Germans, *junacy* and Ukrainians, sometimes only by SP officers, depending on the *Vernichtungskommando's* orders and plans for the day in

question. There was an immense variety of orders; they were countless, one coming right on the heels of another. All of them were relayed by Szeryński or Lejkin. New orders and instructions were being made public all the time by SP headquarters. On the fifth day of the *Aktion*, notices in Polish and Yiddish went up on walls and bill-posts announcing, in essence, that all non-working residents of the ghetto, regardless of age, were subject to resettlement. Those wishing to avoid being forced to go should, in their own interests, present themselves voluntarily at the *Umschlagplatz*, from which they would go to be resettled as laborers in the east. Those who did so would not be separated from their families, and would receive three kilos of bread and one kilo of marmalade per person for the journey. At the bottom was the signature: "Director of the Public-Order Service /96/ Józef Andrzej Szeryński." The very next day, about three thousand persons showed up. The announcement had been calibrated well. Three kilos of bread and one kilo of marmalade, and families would not be split up. In the ghetto people were beginning to starve. The stores were closed; the only ones still functioning were the distribution centers, where a ration-card entitled a person to one-eighth of a kilo of bread per day. At every checkpoint, in addition to the normal complement of gendarmes and <Polish policemen?>, there was an SS man. The "Eighteen Destroyers"⁷ searched each group of site-workers on their

⁷ Apparently, a reference to the members of the *Vernichtungskommando*.

return, allowing them to carry in only the regulation quantity of foodstuffs: five kilos of bread and potatoes. They could not be bribed -- no one would have dared to try in any case. From early morning until evening, they held revolvers, with the safety-catches off, in their right hands, and drew a bead with them for any and all offenses, imagined or real. Likewise the smuggling subsided across the walls, which were heavily guarded on the Aryan side by *szaulisi*.⁸ Besides, there was no one to do the smuggling. The first to volunteer for resettlement in the east were the smugglers and draymen, and the entire underworld of Krochmalna Street. They marched off on their own, loaded down with knapsacks and bags containing their personal possessions. To the left of the entrance to the *Umschlag* they drew their three kilos of bread and kilo of marmalade. The families were kept together. They entered the *Umschlag* almost gaily, confident in their young and healthy bodies and powerful fists, sure that they would get along fine out there in the east -- they had no fear of working hard for the good of their aged mothers and fathers and their children. As they gazed with pity on those who had been brought there by force -- torn from children, family and friends -- they were glad of the step they had taken. It was only just before they boarded the train that they realized they had been tricked. The people were herded in groups of five hundred into the enormous yard in front of the tracks. There they were

⁸ Lithuanian riflemen.

selected into categories by the SS men Michelson, Witossek and Handtke, who picked out the healthy /97/ young men and set them apart. The children, wives and fathers all went to the boxcars. Several dozen young men in good health and a few young women were taken from each group, but never husbands and wives together. Thick leather riding whips left bloody stripes on the faces of the "*Freiwillige Umsiedler*" as they huddled together. The healthy young men were led under heavy guard to the building of the quarantine hospital, now empty, which was located on the Aryan side at No. 109 Leszno. The quarantine had been transferred to <the control of> the so-called "*Dulag*"⁹; from there in turn they were collected by individual Germans, the administrators of the labor camps. "*Freiwillige Umsiedler*": such was the inscription neatly lettered on pieces of white cardboard that German Jews wore hanging from their necks as they entered the *Umschlag*. They lugged heavy chests with them; the families stuck close together. They wore white armbands and an additional mark of their origins, the six-pointed gold star with the inscription "*Jude.*"

The famine steadily increased. By Szeryński's order the proprietors of the food-distribution stores were stripped of their immunity. The hunger and constant blockades, which frequently lasted from dawn to dusk, the harassment: this constant buffeting was more than people reduced to beggary could endure. Every day another loved one or close friend

⁹ That is, *Durchgangslager*, transit-camp.

would vanish; every day they had to hunt for a new hiding-place, until they presented themselves, in the end, to collect their three kilos of bread and kilo of marmalade. As the famine swelled, so did the number of those reporting voluntarily for resettlement. This abrupt increase in the number of volunteers persisted for a few days, during which the Germans called off the raids and contented themselves with the contingents that came in on their own, augmented by an insignificant number of people delivered by the SP. This only lasted a couple of days, the time it took for the truth about the "inviolability" of the <volunteer> families to penetrate the walls of the *Umschlag* and get back to the city. The number of volunteers plummeted to a few dozen isolated individuals per day. The ghetto began to resemble an enormous sheep-fold /98/ raided each day by a ferocious beast. Every day there were fewer and fewer sheep, and no end was in sight. Every afternoon, when the raids were over, crowds of people would pour out into the streets to look for one another. They would run with fear in their hearts to the spot where a blockade had taken place during the morning to see whether anyone had survived. Every afternoon, from the gateways of seemingly defunct apartment buildings, people would lean out waiting to ask a Jewish policeman: "Is that it? Are they done for today?" [Then] they would run to look for their families. They wept -- from despair, in the case of those who found empty apartments; from happiness, in the case of those who were reunited [with their loved ones].

Then they would run to take cover, seeking out places in the "shops," which continued as before to be off-limits [to the raids]. The number of job-seekers was so great that the successful applicants were not those who [actually] were tailors, cobblers or seamstresses, but those who had money. One had to buy off the so-called "*Werkschutzen*," who maintained order in the long lines, the officials who approved the registration-lists, and the managers of the "shops," who had the final say as to whether one obtained a quick interview or, more importantly, received permission to work. The tailor's "shops" accepted only those applicants who had sewing machines; to join a shoemaker's "shop" one had to own a workbench and tools. Whether the applicant was a craftsman in the given trade was, for the present, a matter of indifference.

Before the *Aktion* began, small tailor's "shops" had existed on the territory of the ghetto; they had been set up by Jews along German lines. Walter C. Többens was a tailor's "shop" located on Prosta Street in the building that formerly housed the Mercantile School; it employed /99/ five hundred craftsmen. Schultz, a shoemaker's "shop" at No. 42 Nowolipie, employed another five hundred craftsmen, and the metalworks of Henryk Wiśniewski, at No. 56 <Stawki>, had <two hundred?> workers. Only a couple of days after the *Aktion* began, Többens had 10,000 persons on its work-rolls, with an equal number of sewing machines. Schultz had 12,000, and Wiśniewski 2000 people. Every day new "shops" sprang up.

Többens took over an additional building that had belonged to the Polytechnical School of Rotwande & Wawelberg. German-owned "shops" confiscated whole blocks of apartment buildings; they either evicted the tenants themselves or -- when they were under contract to produce goods of vital importance -- had the buildings cleared for them by the Gestapo. "Resettlement" raids would often take place repeatedly in such locations. Thus Oschman's "shop," a laundry service that refurbished uniforms and mended clothing, was located in the Hotel Bristol. Wilhelm During took over nine apartment buildings on Prosta Street for machine-shops. Prehl's paperworks occupied two apartment buildings at Nos. 5 and 7 Nowolipie. K. G. Schultz took over the knitwear factory of Brora & Powiński at No. 78 Leszno; Garheine & Miller occupied Mylna Street between Karmelicka and Przejazd, and Nowolipie from No. 18 to Przejazd; this "shop" was designed to consolidate under one name the profusion of small machine-shops, woodworking studios, iron-works and spinning-mills located on the site. The Brushmakers' "shop" took over a row of apartment buildings on Świętojerska. Von Schön set up "shops" to turn out metal products in a pair of buildings on <?> Street. "Transeria," which belonged to the *Wehrmacht*, occupied the facilities of the former Polytechnical School at No. 24 Stawki. Brauer converted nine apartment buildings into "shops" serving a variety of purposes: the refurbishing of helmets, the manufacture of knitwear and the production of leather goods.

/100/ All of the "shops" were enclosed within temporary hoarding immediately after they went into operation. Every "shop" was taking on workers; they hired a couple of thousand workers daily, without asking to see any work-permits. Before the bureaus would have had time to draw up the relevant documents, and the proprietor of a "shop" to sign the work-certificates, the already-hired applicants would have been rounded up and sent to the *Umschlag*. The *Aktion* had not ceased. Each day, as the number of people [coming to the *Umschlag*] dwindled, the Germans invalidated, during the selection procedure, more and more types of documents. At first, it was enough to have the red *Meldekarte* certifying that the bearer had fulfilled his obligations towards the *Arbeitsamt*. Then they honored only *Meldekarten* containing a notation that the individual was employed. Next they began to scrutinize carefully the places of employment listed and to reject small firms; then they disallowed all such firms in general. When the "shops" appeared, all one had to have was a work-permit, which in turn became invalid unless accompanied by a reference from the *Arbeitsamt*. Before the *Arbeitsamt* could provide the annotations, thousands more went to the *Umschlag* even though they had work-permits. The "shops" were left with machines and rosters listing thousands of new workers who were being hauled away into the distance in boxcars. On the seventh day of the *Aktion* the three thousand officials of the *Jüdische Soziale Selbsthilfe* were directed to remove their armbands -- their services were no

longer needed. On the eighth day work-permits issued by the food-distribution stores were canceled. On the tenth <!--> day the work-permits of postal employees were invalidated. On the eleventh day of the operation the Germans voided the permits, honored up to now, of the owners of small workshops, even of those whose output went exclusively to the *Wehrmacht*. Every day, in different parts of the ghetto, larger or smaller sections of streets were blocked off, and the people forced out of their apartments into the street. One of the Germans would direct the selection process. People would present documents that /<101>-102/ only the day before had been valid; only a few hours would have elapsed since some other German had shown them mercy, but now, the next day, this one would send the group to the *Umschlag*.

In the ghetto a stampede began, a regular competition to obtain "good" documents. People paid a couple of thousand zlotys for a document that seemed -- literally seemed -- valid <który wydał się być dobrym, dosłownie wydawał się ?>. "Weren't these the valid documents that got a few hundred people released from the *Umschlag* just yesterday?"

The news about those who got such reprieves spread quickly. The very same day thousands of people would mob the given "shop," and by paying exorbitant fees and pulling strings [they] would wangle a document that -- the next day or a few hours later -- would be a worthless piece of paper. Worse, the possessors of such a document would not [bother to] hide on rooftops, in cellars or in various other cubby-

holes, but would come out when their buildings were blocked off and present themselves for selection; they would go to the *Umschlag* stunned and pinning their hopes on the second round of selections, which despatched them to the boxcars. An actual stock market for the "shops" was set up; the "unregistered shares" <nienotowane akcje?> of various "shops" rose and fell from day to day. On the tenth day [of the *Aktion*], the work-documents of <Transeria>, Többens and Schultz led the market. These documents were not one-hundred-percent reliable; there were frequent instances where people went to the trains even with these certificates. However, the blame for this was placed on the Germans, who did not honor each other's arrangements. For it would often happen that one of the Germans would, in the process of making selections, release as many as a couple of thousand people. They would exit by the gates of the *Transferstelle* in a dense column and pass through the archway. When they were moments away from being free to disperse to their homes, another German would drive up and turn the entire party back to the *Umschlag*, making sure that they all got /103/ into the boxcars without undergoing any further selections. A supposedly foolproof document was a *Meldekarte* "annotated" by the *Arbeitsamt* and confirmed with the Gestapo's round stamp bearing the inscription "*Sicherheits-Dienst*." This was a document that the majority [of Jews] could only dream about for now.

Such documents were obtained by the officers of the SP and the Emergency Service, and by senior officials of the Council. Moreover, they received additional documents for their families. These stated the first and last names, and degree of relationship, of the given family member; at the top of the certificate was affixed a red stamp with the inscription, "*Nicht unterliegt der Umschlag*" ("Not to be taken to the *Umschlag*"). At the bottom of the sheet was the round stamp of the Gestapo ("*Sicherheits-Dienst*").

These were the ones who were safe. [Also] safe were the squad members who escorted groups [of workers] to German work-sites, the officials of the *Arbeitsamt*, and the couriers of the *Eildienst*. While the [couriers] did not have documents from the <"S.D.">, they were protected by their caps and badges, which gave them the appearance of SP officers. Also safe were the employees of Pinkiert's burial firm. All of the [other] smaller firms merged with his. An [official] cap was the best security during this period. It made no difference whether it was the black cap of the burial firm -- worn even by women (the wives and daughters of the gravediggers) -- the blue cap of the Jewish police, the red cap of the <Emergency Service?> or the gray cap of the *Eildienst*. Another good form of protection was a hideaway in an attic or cellar, or in the walls of bomb-wrecked buildings.

What other forms of security there might be was anybody's guess. A person had to take his chances. There

were frequent instances of people showing up at the *Umschlag* two or three times in the space of a couple of days, only to return home again each time. They happened to arrive on lucky days when the selections were [already] completed, or on days when there were too many people at the *Umschlag* for the number of boxcars available. For on days /104/ when there were too few people for the waiting boxcars -- whether, because of the heat, the Ukrainians did their work sluggishly, or a street was chosen that had already been scoured clean of its residents, or there were a lot of places to hide in the targeted area -- the Germans would go out into the city and conduct their own raid, assisted by the Ukrainians and some SP officers picked up along the way. Such a raid would take only a few minutes. There would be a flurry of shots, a dozen corpses -- and a few thousand people would head for the *Umschlagplatz* without undergoing a selection procedure or having their documents examined, nor would any of the young men be chosen for Dolna Street. They would be led through the nearest entrance, the gates of the *Transferstelle*, straight to the boxcars. Everything would happen so fast that no one would have time to intervene, even when there was someone important, someone indispensable, such as the chief production manager of some "shop," among those rounded up. In these days of confusion and panic -- menacing days filled with the howls and weeping of thousands of people as they were sent away, days filled with the lamentations of those left behind, whose mothers, fathers and children had

been taken from them -- the eyes of the whole ghetto were turned towards two men: Kohn and Heller. All were unanimous in declaring that if anything was to be saved, if there was any possibility of deflecting or stopping the infernal machine in its onslaught, these two young men were the only ones who could do it. The institution that had represented the ghetto up to now, the *Judenrat*, had ceased to exist when Czerniaków died. To all outward appearances, the SP was powerful; from the ordinary patrolmen right up to Szeryński its men were untouchable. Yet it was kept in the dark. Granted, they were in contact with the Germans, but this contact consisted merely in receiving and carrying out orders. None of the leaders of the SP had as yet succeeded in exchanging a single word with a German. None of them could boast of having dared to put a single question to someone from "the Eighteen." /105/ No one had the nerve to chance it. Each such question might cost a man his life. And they knew all too well -- every day they could see it with their own eyes -- how much the life of one Jew within range of a [German] revolver was worth. Even Lejkin, who was in contact with them for a couple of hours a day; who pored over the map of the ghetto together with them; who was brave and aspired to be a public figure -- even though he tried more than once, when the <SS> officers happened to be in a good mood, to steer the conversation towards even an approximate answer to the all-important question, "How many more?" -- never got a response. Several times he approached

each of them separately, with no result. The only answer [he got] was silence, a dangerous gleam in [the other's] eyes, or a derisive smirk. Meanwhile panic was mounting from day to day; the inhabitants were clutching at straws. They did not know what to do to save themselves from making the journey into the unknown. It only increased the general state of nervousness and turmoil that the Germans had so far not signed a single decree. Those that had been promulgated made no mention of the fact that they were issued on orders from the authorities. Czerniaków's suicide suggested that the ghetto should expect the worst. On the other hand, the fact that an entire phalanx of Jews -- those who worked for the Gestapo -- remained untouchable hinted that deliverance was to be looked for only from that quarter. During this period there was a pair of rising stars, Gestapo Jews, besides those who were already well known. One of these was Ehrlich, nicknamed Josel Kapota: the nickname went back to pre-war days, when Ehrlich was an indigent tailor whose entire trade consisted of making capotes for Hasidic Jews.¹⁰ Josel Ehrlich had a brother who also worked for the Gestapo, Beer Ehrlich, a lackluster fellow /106/ whose sole ambition was to get rich. In contrast, Josel had higher aspirations. He wanted to shine, to become popular; he wanted to be the talk of the town. He was no cynic, and money was not his only deity. He would have gladly given half of the wealth he had

¹⁰ Polish *kapota* here refers to the characteristic long coat, also known as a *lapserdak*, formerly worn by Polish and Galician Jews.

acquired to get the Jews to speak well of him, to say that he was their benefactor. Back before the *Aktion* began, he had been made inspector, by order of the Germans, of Central Detention, with the rank of lieutenant commander. He wore the star on his cap with genuine satisfaction. He proudly displayed each [new] military decoration he received in public. Right after the *Aktion* commenced, Josel was promoted to Lejkin's rank: he received another star. This illiterate Jew, who spoke three languages, Polish, Yiddish and German -- mangling each of them mercilessly -- was the darling of the Warsaw Gestapo. And even though the gang from Lublin was far more dangerous and implacable, they turned a blind eye to the doings of the Warsaw Gestapo's favorite. Almost every day Josel Kapota plucked a dozen people from the *Umschlag*. He would lead them away right before the eyes of the "Vernichtungskommando." Daily the inhabitants of the ghetto witnessed seemingly impossible things. Handtke would be talking with Ehrlich. This bloodthirsty brigand, who fired at random into a crowd, who was incapable of walking calmly past any group of Jews, who brandished a revolver or a club from morning to night, [this] beast who knew only one way to talk and that was to roar: [he] would clap Ehrlich amiably on the shoulder. The Germans even respected [the immunity] of the building Ehrlich resided in at No. 23 Nowolipie; it remained untouched through repeated blockades on the street. Ehrlich grew in power, and his obtuse face was radiant with joy. He scurried about town all day long, making the rounds

of all the <inhabited?> sections of the ghetto. Everywhere he brought help and relief, /107/ as well as freedom for several people. He knew he had power, but he did not know what the limits of his power were. He deliberately overdid things, putting himself at risk, just to find out what he could get away with. He could get away with a great deal; he was even allowed to chat with them and ask them questions in reply to which others got a bullet in the head -- he would just receive a pat on the shoulder and nothing more. Lejkin, Szeryński and the town fathers of the ghetto watched Ehrlich's efforts hopefully. Ehrlich made innumerable attempts, but finally gave up. When, on the twentieth day of the *Aktion* a group of councilmen put the question -- that agonizing question -- to him, he replied sincerely: "I don't know anything. I'm not smart enough for them, but I'll try again." Two others also tried: Lolek Skosowski and Arel Weintraub. They made no attempt to check the storm already unleashed; they would have been content to know how many more victims it was going to engulf. Their efforts came to naught.

Meanwhile Kohn and Heller, who had been the most powerful men [in the ghetto] heretofore, were keeping still. Their power was unbroken, and even though they did not show themselves but stayed holed up in their offices, public opinion was unanimous: everything was lost; they were going to expel the entire ghetto. Either Kohn knew this and had thrown up his hands, or he and Heller were planning

something. After the *Aktion* had been going on for a few days, various signs began to indicate that Kohn and Heller had swung into action. They opened a "shop" under the name of Gustav Siegmunt. They already were in touch with Witossek and Michelson. They were entitled to get several dozen people released from the *Umschlag* each day. All it took was a calling card sent to Szmerling with a list of the people to be released, and they immediately went free. Kohn and Heller attended a drinking party organized at Gestapo [headquarters] at No. 25 Szucha Avenue. They still refrained from bringing up the most important topics, but had already opened a channel of communications [with the Germans]. Kohn was to take over the Council, Heller the Provisions Board. Kohn was organizing several "shops" to manufacture a variety of goods. For the past few days Kohn and Heller /108/ had worn the most confident expressions on their faces. These cheerful expressions, despite rumors to the contrary, were a sham. They were all for show. Alone in their offices, the countenances of these two men -- whose names were on the lips of every resident of the ghetto -- were clouded with anxiety. They would hold council there together for hours on end.

"The saddest part of it," said Heller, "is that people are starting to trust us, and we can't do a thing to help. I liked it better when they thought we were crooks, when they said we lived at others' expense, than I do now, when so many bigwigs are coming to us for help."

Moryc kept silent. He was of the same opinion, felt the same way, but still had not lost heart. "Everything's not lost yet," he said. "Maybe in a couple of days we'll manage to get something out [of them.]"

"In a couple of days you say, but I'm telling you, Moryc, in a couple of days you won't know any more than you do today. In the meantime, during those 'couple of days' they'll haul off another few thousand people. And do you know where they're hauling them to? Treblinka!"

"Listen, let not upset each other. Let's do whatever we can as long as they haven't slammed the door in our faces, until we've asked the questions that matter to the whole ghetto. There's still a chance. Two days from now I'm planning to throw a banquet at the *Befehlstelle*. Maybe a suitable opportunity will come up then."

"Don't be a fool! I no longer believe that we can succeed where so many others have tried and failed. You want my advice, Moryc? Let's pack up our things and move to Łódź."

"You know full well I won't do that. If you want to, go by yourself."

"We won't be able to pull it off, Moryc. We can't bribe them -- they're richer than ten men like us. There's no getting to them, not with gold, or with diamonds either: they've already stolen plenty in Lublin. And they won't do a thing for Jews for nothing."

/109/ "Why do they put up with us then?"

"Why? Because it amuses them. They have a laugh at our expense. They watch us and put up with us, because, as they say, we have powerful friends in the Warsaw Gestapo. You know as well as I do that the lowest-ranking non-com in that gang of "Eighteen" is senior to all of "our" majors, who would [be only too glad to] tell us [what we want to know], except that they don't know anything, either."

"I'm staying, even if I have to lose my head."

"Well, that's a pity. You know me, too -- I'll be your partner to the end."

The banquet went off as planned. There was a mixed gathering of people in attendance: a few officers and non-coms from the "Eighteen," a few senior Gestapo officers, and Kohn and Heller. The drinking went on until dawn. Corks kept popping merrily from fresh bottles of French <champagne>. There was a steady flow of conversation and jokes. Kohn and Heller sat active and alert, waiting in vain for the right moment to drop so much as an oblique reference to the matter weighing on their minds. It was already well after daybreak when they emerged from the building at No. 103 Żelazna, where the "Eighteen," the so-called *Befehlstelle*, had their quarters. In the streets the day's "action" was underway; the first group was being conducted to the *Umschlag*. [Kohn and Heller] walked the whole length of Leszno maintaining cheerful expressions for appearance's sake. The sole result of the drinking party was that the revelers decided to turn over to the firm of Kohn & Heller an

apartment building at No. 9 Smocza for the private use of the two men and their families. This building was to enjoy immunity [from the raids], regardless of the number and identities of the persons residing there. In addition, Kohn and Heller were to receive a license for several "shops" <modeled on German firms?>. ("Everyone will go <to the Umschlag?>, but you will be the last.")

There was a surprise waiting for them at Kohn & Heller. In Kohn's office a young man sat lounging [in a chair]. His policeman's cap, with three stars, was lying on the desk. The janitor had already informed them, on their way in, that Szance Grajer was waiting for them in Kohn's office. Grajer was the head of the Public-Order Service /110/ in Lublin; he worked simultaneously for the Gestapo. He was an unsavory character, without scruples, one of that handful of Jews who sold their souls and their honor and never changed their ways to the end of their careers. For Kohn this repugnant young face was a sinister omen, yet he greeted the man politely. Heller went to his own office without looking at the visitor; they had some long-standing professional scores to settle between them. They were mortal enemies. The very fact that Grajer had the nerve to come to their office was itself rank insolence, but since he dared to do so, it showed that he had powerful backing. Heller sat down at his desk clenching his fingers; the door to the next office had been left ajar, and he could hear the conversation. Grajer purposely spoke in a

loud voice. He was calmly relating -- though with feigned sadness -- the tragic [last] days of the Lublin ghetto.

"They didn't leave anyone. The whole lot ended up on the scrap heap. There are just a couple of thousand Jews on Lipowa Street, but that's now a concentration camp. Understand, I did everything I could to avert this disaster. They think very highly of me. I have a lot of influence, but I couldn't do a thing."

Kohn listened, trying to figure out why Grajer was telling him all this. Heller sat gripping the arms of his chair in an effort to restrain himself from rushing into the next room.

"But they're powerful. The Lublin Gestapo is very powerful. These are men who have the Party's trust. The same thing is going to happen here. <I say that>, even though I plan, for the time being, to move to Warsaw."

Unable to stand any more of this, Zysze Heller flung the door open with a crash and lunged at Grajer like a wild animal. He grabbed him by the lapels and shook him, while screaming right in his face.

"Out with it! Why are you telling us all of this, you scoundrel! What are you trying to worm out of us? I'll strangle you with my own hands if you think you're going to get away with feeding on /111/ other's people's troubles."

Moryc intervened, and Heller let go of the sneering young man. The latter got up with a deadly gleam in his malevolent gray eyes. Speaking slowly and distinctly, he

said, "I came to you as a friend. You won't save the ghetto in any case, but we could make some money. You won't get anywhere with the Lublin Gestapo, <but?> you'll come to regret the way you've treated me."

"Get out!" Heller shouted at him in reply.

When they were alone, a silence fell over the office. Heller was the first to break it. Looking into Kohn's drooping mournful face, he tried to justify his behavior.

"Moryc, forgive me. I know I did the wrong thing. I'm no diplomat, I'm vulgar and crass, a Jew who works for the Gestapo -- although my father was an upstanding, God-fearing Jew. I've gone down a bad road, I was seduced by money and comfort, but you yourself know that ever since the time you talked some sense into me, appealing to my conscience, I have done a lot of good, and right now I'd give everything I have to be able to help, to be able to head off this catastrophe. I can't bear the sight of so many tears. I can't stand to watch my fellow Jews being herded off to Treblinka. They're better off than I am, since they don't know what's in store for them. So when I saw this creep here in the office, when I heard that phony grief in his voice as he was talking about the expulsions from the Lublin ghetto, I couldn't control myself. I know it would be better to <try to> get along with him."

An expression of weariness and deep emotion spread over Kohn's face. It was the first time in his life he had ever heard such passionate words, words that erupted as it were

straight from the heart. He felt a fresh surge of sympathy for the companion of his down-and-out days before the war, for the partner who had shared in his wartime career. He placed his hand reassuringly on Heller's shoulder.

"No doubt about it -- things are bad. He wanted to sniff out our intentions. He was sent by the Lublin Gestapo, because they know that we have some pull in Warsaw. Every unit, every department, in the Gestapo is jealous of the power of the rest. But let's not kid ourselves too much -- our influence isn't worth a whole lot. /112/ If they want to deport 100,000, they will. If they want to deport 200,000, they will -- and our 'influence' won't do one bit of good."

"What are you trying to cheer me up for?" Heller interrupted him. "I don't kid myself that we're such big shots that we can countermand Himmler's orders. I don't delude myself that we can cut the number of people they plan to kill. This is not within our power. What we can do is what Rumkowski managed to do in Łódź. We can lessen the misfortune, we can pull strings so that there won't be any more victims than 'necessary', we can try to keep things from turning into chaos. If 200,000 are to be left in Warsaw, then let it be done without this kind of terror, let these thousands of children who will be left have fathers and mothers, let husbands have their wives <with them>. You have all the proof you need that we have already succeeded in accomplishing something. We've gotten our own apartment building, we've obtained a license for ten "shops" that will

employ some fifty thousand people -- that in itself is a sign that they don't intend to expel everybody."

Moryc smiled. The Zysze he knew never used to talk so much.

"Chin up, Zysze. Let's get down to work. Maybe those brutes won't do that much damage to us."

Already, from the other side of the door, could be heard the wailing of people calling out expectantly for help.

A few days later an SS subaltern walked into this same office and politely explained to Kohn and Heller that he had been directed to bring them to SP headquarters for a small conference. Kohn, who was expecting two officers of the Warsaw Gestapo to show up for an appointment, on his way out left instructions <to tell them> that he had been summoned to the SP.

They were greeted in Szeryński's large office by Witossek, Orf and Handtke. The conversation was brief; the riding-whips came out. At first they were too stunned to speak, and then they tried to make explanations, but the blows came faster than their words. They were pleading desperately when practiced hands, /113/ armed with whistling lashes, drove them out of the office, down the stairs and out to the wall of the courtyard, where they were put to death with a few shots. It had been scarcely five minutes since they had emerged from their car elegant, healthy and suspecting nothing. Now they lay slaughtered at the foot of the wall, two bloody human rags. The echoes of the shots had

not yet died away when two officers from the Warsaw Gestapo pulled up in a car before SP headquarters. They were too late. The news was all over the ghetto within half an hour: Kohn and Heller had been killed. How could it have happened that these two had perished? They had been so careful -- they were supposed to be the last to die.

The story was quite simple, and less complicated than it appeared. As was later revealed, agents planted by Szance Grajer had sold Kohn, by way of his brother-in-law, Szpryncer, two diamonds, beautiful specimens of *Blauweiss*, at a bargain rate. Kohn and Heller, who had been looking for just such an item to give as a gift to <the> two Warsaw Gestapo officers, bought them without haggling. That same day, as they were passing through a checkpoint, the gendarme searched them and found the diamonds, one on Kohn and the other on Heller. Even though this was the first time in their careers that a gendarme had permitted himself the liberty of frisking them after checking their documents, Kohn and Heller shrugged it off as <part of> the tight security accompanying the *Aktion*. The gendarme returned the diamonds, but wrote a report that wound up in the hands of the Lublin Gestapo, <which exercised supervisory control wherever it carried out its tasks>. There was a struggle for power going on; this led to frequent clashes between the local authorities and the special unit [from Lublin]. The latter enjoyed unlimited powers, exceeding those of the former, and while the two sides made efforts to abide by the rules, each took advantage

of every opportunity to thwart the other. Kohn and Heller, as /114/ the favorites of the Warsaw Gestapo, had become inconvenient for the Lublin gang. However, there was nothing they could be charged with; their reputations were clean. Their highly-placed protectors continually sought to give them new <commercial> concessions; these experiments were designed to feel out the intentions of the special unit -- to determine just how long <their power was to remain in check and how extensive their influence was>. The diamond "smuggling" was enough of a pretext to do in Kohn and Heller. So as to give the whole affair a veneer of legitimacy, the Lublin Gestapo conducted a supplementary inquiry, which established that Kohn's two brothers-in-law had acted as go-betweens in the sale of the diamonds. Jaków Stancel, recently moved from Łódź with his young wife Ajga, and Leon Skowron, who was in the SP, were executed before an open grave in the cemetery. The same fate befell Ajga Skowron, who had accompanied her husband to the inquiry.

The deaths of Kohn and Heller led not only to the killings among their immediate family members, but to the demise of the entire organization of the firm of Kohn & Heller. That same day a few thousand people were left without protection. After Kohn and Heller, the end came for Ehrlich. His death was almost farcical, like the farcical figure he cut in his much-vaunted three-starred cap. During one of the many successive blockades on Nowolipie Street, Josel Kapota was standing before the gates of the building

where he lived when a squad of Ukrainians arrived to cordon off the street. The house at No. 23 was, as usual, off-limits to them.

Ehrlich stood before the gates rocking back and forth on his short legs in their elegant high boots. Time after time, the gateways of the [various] apartment buildings filled with people; the group [to be deported] was slowly swelling on the pavement when Orf and Bogudt rode up on a motorcycle. Orf at once threw everything into such turmoil that the assembled group, instead of waiting quietly, recoiled in a wave onto the sidewalks and back to the gateways of the /115/ buildings. As if this was just what he had been waiting for, Orf brought out his revolver with a practiced motion. Several shots rang out, bringing the situation under control. On the pavement lay the bodies of several people, whom Bogudt finished off with shots to the back of the head or the temple. In front of No. 23 lay Josel Kapota, grinning as if pleased to have met his death. Beside him lay his policeman's cap with its three stars. Bogudt called Orf over. An SP officer standing nearby had the impression that the two men exchanged knowing smiles. The next time <Nowolipie> was blocked off, No. 23 was a building no different from any other, as was the one in which Kohn and Heller had lived. There was still one inviolable residence in the ghetto, at No. 101 Leszno adjacent to the *Befehlstelle*, located at No. 103. The Lublin group had its offices and living quarters in the *Befehlstelle*. The ground

floor was set aside for the offices, which were run by Commander Marcelli Czapliński, the lawyer, and Lt. Commander Meizner. The two of them had prepossessing features and spoke excellent German. The upper floors, painstakingly decorated in a matter of hours with luxurious modern-style furniture, served as living quarters for the Lublin unit. Guard duty was performed by Ukrainians and *junacy* in alternate shifts. The Germans requisitioned, as their personal servants, a few dozen good-looking Jewish women. After days of bloodshed in the ghetto, there was no shortage of candidates. A couple dozen young women served the Germans in the capacity of chambermaids. In return, they obtained the right to live, together with their families, in the building next door. Besides these maids [and their families], the vice president of the Council, the engineer Lichtenbaum, and his family lived at No. 103, as well as some Jews in the employ of the Gestapo and a few senior officials of the Council who received permission to do so from the Germans they been in contact with prior to the start of the *Aktion*. This building gave the impression of being a hideaway located right next to the lair of a bloodthirsty beast.

/116/ The *Aktion* did not slacken -- on the contrary, the number of people being expelled rose every day. Each day, from in front of SP headquarters they fanned out into the city: the SP, Ukrainians, *junacy*, Germans. The ranks of the

SP had been increased, with the acceptance of new applicants, to twenty-five hundred men. Every morning they set out in the direction of Żelazna, watching with anxiety in their hearts to see which way they would be taken: to the left towards the little ghetto, to the right towards the main ghetto -- or even split up into two groups. Every SP officer had a family that he kept watch over from early morning until well into the evening; lately there had been instances when the raids ended only at 9 or 10 PM. The certificates they had obtained notwithstanding, they kept guard over their families. These certificates, [stamped] "*Nicht unterliegt der Umsiedlung*," and bearing the notorious seal of the S.D., were honored at the whim [of the Germans]. There were too many of these documents around, and it was too easy to get one. Until August 6th, each officer could, by paying one zloty, obtain several -- as many as a dozen -- certificates for members of his immediate family and for more distant relatives, including grandmothers and cousins. These papers were honored for a few days; at length, as the population shrank, only those certificates taken out in the names of the officers' wives and children remained valid. For the officers of the SP this came as a heavy blow. Having placed great faith in the sanctity of these documents, they had not [taken any steps] to secure the safety of their families. They had made no efforts to place them in jobs at the "shops," which, though far from being sure havens, were the only places to offer any guarantee of safety -- especially if

one belonged to a large "shop" like those of Többens or Schultz, where one could even have a place to live -- if only in a workshop or a hallway, or even on a staircase. Before the SP had time to realize what had happened, a few thousand people went to the boxcars. Getting into the overfilled "shops" was no longer so easy to do. That left no alternative /117/ but to hide one's father and mother, sister and brother -- in short, one's entire family. To hide them in camouflaged cellars and keep watch over these locations. They swapped guard posts with one another and, if it was possible, entrusted their families to the care of a fellow officer on terms of the strictest confidence. Once again, the SP was elevated, in the eyes of public opinion in the ghetto, to the role of executioners; even though they were untouchable, what they went through was greater than what others in the ghetto had to endure. Every morning twenty-five hundred men, their hearts full of trepidation, watched the short section of Ogrodowa Street up to Żelazna, where they would head either to the left towards the little ghetto, or to the right towards the main ghetto -- or they would be divided up. This last possibility was the worst. It meant an "action" on a wide scale; it meant, for every man who went to the little ghetto but had a family in the main ghetto, the torture of uncertainty -- and, all too often, come evening, the despairing truth.

For some unaccountable reason, as the deportations intensified, the Jews persisted in the delusion that the

Aktion was about to end. When the number of those expelled reached into the tens of thousands, they consoled themselves that it would stop at 30,000; when that figure was surpassed, they settled on 100,000. In the end they stopped counting: there was no one to keep count. The populace groaned, stunned by the enormity of the disaster that grew from hour to hour.

On the seventeenth day of the *Aktion*, the men of the SP were ordered to move, together with their families, to a residential block set aside for them that encompassed a quadrangle of buildings on Karmelicka, Nowolipki and Dzielna streets. The police block was fenced off with barbed wire strung on posts driven into the sidewalks along the curb. Each police officer was entitled to live there with his wife and children; he was not allowed to bring any other family members with him. The instructions regarding the families were carried out to the letter. There was no instance of anyone daring to jeopardize the welfare of his fellow officers by smuggling in /118/ his mother, father or sister, because the entire SP was held accountable in the event that an unauthorized resident was discovered living in the block. And yet the mothers and sisters of some officers did live in the police residences, and legally at that. A number of officers, bachelors at the start of the *Aktion*, entered into fictitious marriages with their mothers or sisters. The rabbis seldom created any difficulties, even back-dating the marriage certificates. The SP administration often conducted

searches to ascertain whether the decree of the authorities was being properly observed. Not infrequently during one of these searches, a youthful officer would fearfully present the marriage license of his wife, who was his mother. The police block was strictly isolated; handpicked officers stood duty at all times in front of the entrance, one to each side of the gate. These were the so-called "reliable" men, whose assignment was to prevent any unauthorized person from entering, even for a moment. If one of the officers wished to bring a family member in, he had to apply for a pass at SP headquarters. Such passes were good for two hours. At the same time that SP officers were moved into their barracks-style accommodations, the "shops" received similar orders. The decree was delivered orally to the managers of the "shops," who were summoned for this purpose to police headquarters. Többens was allotted a row of apartment buildings in the little ghetto on Prosta Street; in the main ghetto the firm was given the even-numbered buildings on Leszno from Karmelicka to Żelazna, the odd-numbered buildings on Nowolipie from the intersection with Żelazna to Smocza, and the odd-numbered side of Karmelicka from Nowolipie to Leszno. Schultz got both sides of Nowolipie between Smocza and Karmelicka. Karl Heinz Muller obtained Mylna and part of Nowolipie. Von Schön got Majzelsa Street; Brauer, ten buildings on Nowolipie. Smaller "shops" were allotted residential buildings for their employees /119/ in proportion to their needs. The current residents had to vacate the

earmarked buildings the very same day. The "shops" immediately set about fencing off their premises. In the space of two days the ghetto acquired a singular appearance. Surrounded on the outside by the wall, it was internally subdivided into small islands enclosed within board fences. At the same time, two decrees signed by Szeryński appeared on the streets. One was for the residents of the little ghetto, the other for those of the main ghetto. All residents of the little ghetto who were not employed in the "shops" there were directed to move to the main ghetto. The decree covering the main ghetto ordered all those living on Solna, Ogrodowa, Biała, Elektoralna, Orła and the odd-numbered side of Leszno to vacate those streets within one day following the publication of the decree. Where were those evicted from the police block supposed to go to live? Or those forced out of the buildings turned over to the "shops," or the buildings located on the streets now excluded from the ghetto? Or all those who were being expelled from the little ghetto? After the *Umschlag* had been crammed with deportees, after the Ukrainians and *junacy* had left the ghetto [for the day], the Jews moved out. This was not the moving-day scene of former days; there were no overloaded carts filled with furniture and household utensils. There were no wagons for hire -- they were being used for other purposes: all means of transport had been requisitioned for conveying the old, the weak and the lame to the *Umschlag*. Besides, no one had any desire to take any furniture along with him. Tens of

thousands of evicted residents quit apartments they had lived in for decades, apartments in which they had been born. They left everything behind: bedding, bric-à-brac, photographs collected over the decades. They packed small bundles -- just a few things -- /120/ put on a few changes of clothing and their winter coats, and made their departures. Their throats were tight from weeping, their eyes dry and incapable of tears. They cast a final glance at their ruined homes, where not long ago mother, wife, father -- everyone -- had been present, and went out with the remnants of their families. On the threshold they passed the new tenants, new people who likewise had left familiar surroundings behind on some other street. They went out and stood before the gates for a long time, wondering whether to go to the right or the left. Where could they go? Where could they hide? Where could they take their little boy? What were they to do with their aged mother? For a few days after the <evictions?> were completed, the streets of the ghetto were thronged with people toting bundles. Some were on their way to new apartments and new jobs; they were filled with anguish for their lost loved ones as they headed towards their new lives as workers for the German Army. Others, the ones with wan expressions in their eyes, were barely able to drag their exhausted bodies along. They seemed to walk without a goal in mind. They walked along, not reacting when they were shoved; when something fell out of their heavy bags to the ground, they did not feel it. They walked straight ahead

unaware that they were surging in a human tide. Each one of them thought that he alone had suffered the greatest calamity. Bloodless lips repeated various words: "They've taken her away..." "What do I have to live for anymore?" "My children are all gone." Many snapped out of their listlessness when they found themselves standing before the spot towards which they had been drifting: the *Umschlag*. It was visible beyond the wall; people could be seen in the windows -- the windows were full of people who had been left until the following day. The boxcars, filled to overflowing, had not been able to take them. The white building drew the wanderers on; it beckoned to them. "That's a roof over our heads, and some peace and quiet for sure. It doesn't matter whether they send us off to live or to die. If we go in with the children, they'll give us some bread for the trip. The children are starving." And the new volunteers would go in -- go in of their own accord -- carrying their belongings, ravenous for a piece of bread. They would find themselves enfolded by the murmuring of voices, the common misery and the peace <that comes from knowing> that they no longer had to think or hide, that they had come here together with their children and their mothers, that they would all depart together, that /121/ they would not have to endure losing any more of those who were still left to them. <And they would embrace their peace. ?>

The others melted away into the dim gateways of strange apartment buildings; they disappeared into gloomy cellars, the dark recesses of attics, or piles of rubble.

Although [their workers] had been ordered into barracks on the model of the SP, the "shops" were lax in their observance of the regulations concerning families. No one was allowed to live in these barracks except the workers themselves. What were they supposed to do with their children and their aged parents? Each morning at 6 AM the workers formed up into columns in front of their residential blocks and marched off, escorted by Jewish policemen or German *Werkschutzen*, to their factory floors nearby. Left back in the barracks behind padlocked doors were the children and the unemployed, the old and the sick. They had to keep quiet and stay away from windows overlooking the street, lest the Germans discover their secret. (Although the thought often occurred to every Jew that the Germans were not fooled.) The workers would return at 6 PM. They came down the street in columns, six men abreast, under an escort of *Werkschutzen*. They were filled with anxiety as they advanced: had there been a raid at the apartment? Would the children still be there? Would they make it safely home, or would the Germans drive up and -- paying no attention to their company lapel pins ("W.C.T.," <??>, "Schultz"), send the whole lot to the boxcars. Such things happened rather frequently. There were days when the blockades were unsuccessful, when they could not extract their quota for the

voracious boxcars: the green automobiles would go out into the city and the Ukrainians would take over a section of a street. If this produced meager results, they would add a contingent of men returning from work to the group. In such cases they did not bother to look at anyone's documents or make any selections, but would just drive the hastily assembled group straight to the boxcars.

Whether one got back home to the barracks safely also depended on the whim of the individual Germans directing the raids. /122/ *Oberscharführer* Handtke was incapable of leaving unmolested any group not headed in the direction of the *Umschlag*. Often, when he was already on his way out of the ghetto after putting in a full day's work, he would drive every party of workers he encountered to the *Umschlag*. Many times he managed to escort a party consisting of two hundred men all by himself; like the other [SS officers], he was an excellent shot, and anyone who attempted to escape paid for it with his life. Each member of the *Vernichtungskommando* unit also had his own habitual mannerisms and ways of doing things. During these weeks of incessant activity, the surviving residents of the ghetto came to know the methods of [the whole unit] and of each individual SS-man. This was especially true of the SP, which was in contact with them for several hours a day and knew very well what to expect from each one of them.

Any group that ran into Handtke or Bogudt on its way home from work wound up at the *Umschlag*, despite their

Ausweise and their Werkschutz guards. At the end of a hard day's work, for which they received a bowl of watery soup in the morning and another for lunch, thousands of these men -- whose jobs and security were the envy of others -- would return home consumed with worry over the children and elderly parents they had left at home, and wondering whether they themselves would make it safely back to their new lodgings.

The "resettlement" Aktion had now been in progress for three weeks, during which the Jews had learned to tell the SS-men in the Lublin unit apart from one another. The SP in particular, since it was in daily contact with them for several hours, was familiar with their respective habits and practices. Each one of them carved his name in bloody syllables in the history of the ghetto. A peculiar legend grew up around every one of them. Taken together they gave meaning to the terrifying word "Vernichtungskommando," while each man separately gave the impression of playing a part in a macabre film scenario. The script was somewhere back in Berlin, and was transmitted in a /123/ dozen or so copies across the vast reaches of Europe that groaned beneath the victorious boot of the Germans. In the General Government, the leading role was entrusted to *Hauptsturmführer* Höfle. Tall and handsome, he had that elusive elegance that sometimes clings to a uniform in spite of its having to conform to a standard pattern. He always appeared in the streets of the ghetto riding in an automobile, from which he never emerged. He would inspect the various stages in the

work of his underlings; making brief stops, he would exchange just a few words with those under his command who were working in the given sector. He often paid visits to the *Umschlag*, where he would get out in the plaza with his chauffeur. He would have a look at the *Umschlag* building -- in the beginning, he even went inside; later, as the building became more and more unsanitary, he discontinued this practice. He would ascend to the upper floors, from which he calmly and nonchalantly surveyed the candidates for "resettlement." Scenes and groups of people that would have provided a great writer, film director or painter with a subject for tragedy left him visibly unmoved.

The barely discernible smirk did not leave his handsome, good-natured face as he passed by an old man whose forehead had been slashed by a blow from a riding whip; the expression on his kindly face did not change when he entered a room where small children and infants, taken from their parents during a selection, lay on the dirty floor in the midst of a swarm of flies. With the same expression on his face, he would instruct Szmerling to reinforce the guards or inquire as to the number of people who were ready to be shipped off. His expression remained just the same when he observed, albeit very briefly, the loading of the boxcars.

His deputy was *Obersturmführer* Michelson. He was about forty-five years old and above average in height; he had the obtuse and puffy face of a butcher. His gestures, however, were characteristically poised. /124/ He made no use of his

revolver or, for that matter, of his leather riding whip, from which he was seldom parted. He always had a polite smile for his subordinates, and issued his orders in a subdued manner. He was more directly involved in the *Aktion* than Höfle. He never got angry or shouted, never shot or struck a single Jew. In his dealings with the SP he was correct to a fault. Lejkin in particular stood high in his regard: he would watch with evident pleasure as the diminutive Lejkin ordered his men about in an energetic voice. Michelson dedicated the greatest amount of time and interest to watching the Ukrainians as they herded groups of Jews from the *Umschlag* to the boxcars. While his appearance on the scene had no effect on the SP, the *junacy* would become alert and mindful of every gesture; they would display energy and efficiency. In the same way, when lower-ranking Germans heard Michelson coming and saw his jovial face, they would behave like privates in the presence of a high-ranking officer. And even though he greeted them almost as colleagues, it was obvious that they were terrified of him.

Untersturmführer SS Witossek was about forty years old, tall, and possessed of a good-looking face etched with passion and unbridled instinct. A sullen fire burned in his eyes, which were the color of pale straw. His figure fit the typical mold of the career soldier. He spent the greater part of each day taking part in the *Aktion*. His behavior was marked by an artificial calmness and self-control.. It was obvious that the role of a man in control of his emotions

came to him with some difficulty. His mask of calm would fall away on the slightest pretext. During the *Aktion* he created the impression of being a wild animal that was only partly subdued, an animal that, instead of tearing its victim to pieces as instinct commanded, would make it perform tricks. A gesture, an individual face or a movement on the part of a group -- some impulse apparent only to him -- was sufficient to make Witossek become unhinged. /125/ Then the mask dropped away, and the wild beast burst forth from behind it. He flailed his arms like a drunken farmhand and roared like an ordinary gendarme. He would let off several shots, thrusting his revolver forward after each one as if he wanted to impart greater force to the murderous bullet. In the course of a day, he would have one or more of these fits, which would be over in a flash. Before he had his revolver back in its holster he would be glancing around to see whether anyone whose opinion mattered to him had noticed; he would anxiously search the other man's eyes for traces of mockery. Wherever he showed up he brought with him an element of uneasiness. In his relations with the SP he behaved properly; addressing himself only to Lejkin, he gave him curt orders without looking at the man. He observed the Jewish policemen from beneath his bushy eyebrows, and ground his jaws incessantly. Up to this point he had forgotten himself only once, killing two policemen. A few minutes after this incident, he gave orders for a couple of platoons of SP officers to be summoned together. When the men were

assembled, he stood before them and gave a speech, which was translated by one of the district commanders. "You are working poorly and sluggishly. Today I was a witness when two of your colleagues, who were in the rear of a small handful of people being escorted to the *Umschlag*, allowed several of them to escape. For this reason I was compelled - - and I repeat with emphasis -- *compelled* to punish them."

Mende and Konrad gave the appearance of being officials with onerous but well-paying jobs. Geipel, whose signature appeared on all the confiscation notices that were posted in pharmacies and various other shops, devoted his energies to the *Aktion*. Day after day, as the work proceeded in the sweltering heat, he drove all over the ghetto. He was in the habit of coming to the *Umschlag* and striking up a conversation with Szmerling, or sometimes with the regular Jewish policemen. On these occasions, he entertained himself /126/ by playing with the flap on his holster. These conversations were limited to a series of joking and ironic questions that he would ask, such as: "How do you like the *Aktion*?" "Where do you think it will stop?" "How much did they make on the raids today?" The lack of response did not put him off. He frequently interrupted himself to call some victim from among the deportees over to him. Once it was a woman with an infant on one arm. He asked her a few questions -- among others, whether she was glad to be going to do manual labor. He ordered that she be given a loaf of bread, for which the woman thanked him. He let her go, and

she walked slowly away, the head of her baby showing above her shoulder. Geipel drew out his revolver and for a long moment savored the desperate hush that fell for a dozen meters in all directions. He took aim, slowly bringing his revolver down: on the mother's shoulder a red spot bloomed. During one of his visits, a rickshaw pulled up carrying an old man of imposing stature who had a beautiful face framed by a white beard that reached down to his waist. Leaning heavily on a cane, the old man descended from the rickshaw. Geipel had already completed his tour of the *Umschlag* and was on his way out. He had already posed his facetious questions, which he answered himself with a throaty, chortling laugh, and had found time to shoot a young girl, to whom he had made an indecent proposition. The girl, [no more than] a child, responded with a look of astonishment in her blue eyes, and stood there for a long time mesmerized with fear at the sight of the revolver extended towards her. Not one word passed her lips. He shot her right between those gaping blue eyes. The girl slumped down and fell at his feet without so much as a moan. Her father beheld this scene from a short distance away. After the shot he ran up to his daughter, gathered her into his arms, and sat against the wall rocking her with a rhythmic motion. Geipel was already leaving when the old man caught his attention. He took a few steps towards him; the old man drew himself up: he was a head taller than the German.

/127/ Within a radius of a dozen meters around these two figures silence once again descended.

"How old are you?"

The old man replied with a fine accent: "Eighty-nine."

"How come you know German so well?"

"I was a teacher in Frankfurt for many years."

In the eyes of the old Jew there gleamed more energy than in Geipel's.

"How is it you've lasted this long?"

As usual, Szmerling was listening in on the conversation. Geipel demanded this, because he loved to watch the enormous fellow blanch at every overture he, Geipel, made towards his victims. The old man kept Geipel waiting for a while for an answer. The German repeated his question.

"When the *Aktion* began, I had 8,000 zlotys. I hid myself in the attic. The SP often discovered me. I begged them to let me be, and I gave them money. Eight times they found my hiding place, and eight times I bought them off. Two other times they left me alone without getting any money. Today they found me for the eleventh time, but I didn't ask them for anything. So here I am."

"So here you are," Geipel repeated after him. "Do you know that I could shoot you?"

"I know that you will shoot me," the old man replied with a laugh.

Geipel gave no sign of having heard this last response. He turned to ask Szmerling something while two Health Department officers grasped the old man under his arms. Geipel shot him from behind; the bullet hit the back of his drooping neck.

<Mireczko> and <Restel> not only had similar faces, they were alike in temperament as well. At the checkpoints, where they had served as inspectors since the beginning of the *Aktion*, they conducted themselves in a whimsical manner. They searched people thoroughly, and <made a show of being?> distressed on finding something that was, by their lights, amusing: cheese in the trousers of a site-worker, a chicken, or a new pair of silk panties that someone was trying to smuggle out of the ghetto on his way to work. They would take everything away -- money, food and gold -- and by way of punishment, or rather as a joke, would deal out a couple /128/ of painful blows with their riding-whips. When they took part in a street raid, they resorted to beating people only when one of their superior officers was in the vicinity. When they themselves were in charge of a sector, they did their work conscientiously; both of them were indefatigable in the performance of their duties, but they refrained from using their whips and their revolvers.

Another such pair was Becker and Witowski. Becker was Viennese. By his own account, he was nineteen years old. Well-built, good-looking, athletic in his movements, always smiling in a good-humored way, he looked like a schoolboy

just waiting for the right moment to pull some prank or play a practical joke. He worked from dawn to dusk. Instead of a whip, he used whatever was handy and suitable for beating people with. It could be the leg of a table, a piece of board, an umbrella, or a cane. He flogged without restraint whenever one of his colleagues was around; when he was alone, he did no harm to anyone -- he even looked the other way if someone tried to escape. When someone was bold enough to make a dash for it, he would grab his revolver and look around to see whether anyone was watching. If no one who could make trouble for him noticed, he put away his revolver with a satisfied smile. If someone saw what was going on or -- Becker thought -- might take notice, he would fire, always on target and with no alteration in his cheerful mood. Witowski was a few years older, but had the same disposition as Becker. There were even instances when Witowski allowed an SP officer to pluck his father, brother or another relative out of a party that had already been brought to the *Umschlag*. Witowski and Becker worked in identical fashion. Separately, each of them was a blessing to those Jews who wound up in his charge. [However,] when the two Germans happened to be find themselves working together on a street blockade or jointly escorting a party of Jews, they would try to outdo each other in the brutality of the beatings they inflicted.

There was another pair of equally fearsome names: /129/
Orf and Handtke. Orf was about thirty years old and of

medium height; he had an oblong face with an elongated nose and, despite his blond, slicked-down hair, he resembled a caricaturist's idea of a Jew. He served at the checkpoints and played a major role in the *Aktion*. In his work at the checkpoints he was quite methodical. Mornings, as the site-workers passed through the gates on their way to work on the Aryan side, he would subject all of them to a search. He ordered the gendarmes simply to maintain order -- in any case, whenever he was on duty, perfect order prevailed. The site-workers were already familiar with him; they knew that if a person so much as leaned forward out of line, Orf would take notice and administer punishment as an example to the rest. He recognized no other form of punishment besides death. At the checkpoints, through which a shrinking number of site-workers was passing, he searched everyone, both on their way out of the ghetto and on their return. Many times he detained those returning at 6 PM until 10 in the evening. At the Leszno-<Żelazna?> checkpoint, through which a couple of thousand people went out, he employed a different system. To each group of workers he delivered a speech. He commanded them to turn in everything voluntarily; if they were on their way out [of the ghetto], he would name hypothetical items of contraband [such as] lingerie, surplus clothing, gold, diamonds and dollars. He allowed them to keep ten zlotys for buying food on their return. After such a speech the workers would make a pile of clothing and undergarments; some of them would produce money. After a few minutes, when it was clear

that no one else was going to step forward to approach the pile, [Orf] would start playing the psychologist. Out of a group of sixty people he would pick out one or two, and he rarely missed: when they were stripped naked, he would find something. Then he would lead the man or woman over to the wall and deliver a shot to the back of the head, regardless of whether he had found fifteen zlotys instead of ten, or a hundred-dollar bill. Besides other goods, the workers smuggled hard currency to the Aryan side; exchange rates had shifted dramatically since the start of the *Aktion*. Large as the sums of money to be earned in this way were /130/ during the *Aktion* period, what accounted for the Jews' willingness to risk their lives? The explanation was simple. Orf never killed more than ten to twelve Jews a day. After he had dispatched his quota, it was possible to get away with the most flagrant offenses right in front of him. Of course, he would search people just as before, taking away everything he found, whether it was food that a worker smuggled in on his return, or clothes and hard currency he was trying to take out with him. While Orf confiscated everything he found, he did not kill anyone at this point. The site-workers would take the chance. Every time he executed someone, [Orf] would become almost as upset as the condemned party: he would be just as pale, and his eyes would bulge from their sockets in the same way. The doomed man's face would break out in a sweat as he was about to die; Orf's pale and bloodless face would [also] become covered with sweat. It was only after

the eighth or ninth murder that he would calm down, killing the last person with something approaching serenity, which stayed with him until evening. The first victim would lead to further ones within a short time -- no one could say <when?>, not even Orf himself in all probability. It was the same on days when he was off duty at the checkpoints and taking part in the *Aktion*: the sight of him instilled fear. There was never any way to tell when Orf would start shooting. Carrying out selections was not part of his duties. All day long, using a motorcycle or a bicycle, he rode around the ghetto, dismounting whenever he came to a blockaded section of street. His favorite pastime was inspecting apartments that had already been searched by the Ukrainians and the *junacy*. He would go around attics and rooftops, and kill anyone he found, even old women and infants. Before they were marched off, he would subject the assembled groups of residents to a close examination. He would seize a victim, whom he would lead over to the gate and kill -- always with a shot to the back of the head. As the *Aktion* wore on, it became observable that his behavior fell into different patterns on different days. There were the days when he grabbed only old men; then there were those when he singled out pretty young women; and other days when he killed children who were standing about alone, crying, /131/ children who had been left orphaned. The same thing happened when he took part in the *Aktion* as when he worked at the checkpoint. After he had killed about twenty victims, his

appearance would change and he would calm down: he did not shout or make threats or run around; rather, he became almost apathetic. "Orf is coming!" "Orf is here!" -- The word would be passed along among the officers of the SP, who tried to snatch his victims away, many times practically right out of his hands. After his tenth or twelfth victim, he would turn into the melancholy Orf <już jest po ...>

In his outward appearance Handtke reminded one of a wild beast. If he had ever for a moment stood still, stopped flailing his arms about and closed his perpetually bellowing mouth, he would probably have looked like a well-fed rustic, with his rough-hewn face, pimply temples, wiry blond hair and watery eyes behind their veil of bristling eyelashes. Probably: but the residents of the ghetto never saw him standing still. "Watch out! Handtke is on his way!" was the same as saying, "Watch out! The tiger has broken out of its cage!" He announced his presence with a roar. While the Ukrainians closed off a street where Handtke was directing a raid, he would swiftly order the *junacy* and the SP to go into the residences; he would take charge of a dozen buildings himself. When he was inside a building, the whole street could hear him yelling. He would run around shooting and waving his arms, kicking and shoving, and giving orders without waiting to see whether they were carried out. He would scurry about pouncing like an animal. He kept jumping in different directions, like a gorilla with no idea of where it wanted to go. He drove the people, scared out of their

wits, before him; he would crack the poor wretches over the head with a chair he happened to run across, or a brick he ripped out of the pavement. He kept this frenzy up without flagging from early in the morning until dusk. He was everywhere: urging on the parties of Jews under guard; driving them out of their apartment buildings; running over to the *Umschlag* where the sight of him spread panic and disorder; /132/ attending to the loading of the boxcars, into which he tossed children, small girls and men with smaller builds on top of those already sitting inside... Wherever he showed up, he left shattered skulls streaming blood, splashes of brain-matter, and mutilated faces in his wake. He would often fling himself in a murderous rage at a Jewish policeman, and desist only when he saw the cap on the man's head -- or on the ground where it had fallen. Then he would "apologize" to the fellow for getting in his way. He stood duty at a checkpoint only once: he had had to be withdrawn after a couple of hours for instigating the following incident. The site-workers had gone out and were [already] waiting on the Aryan side to return to the ghetto. [Handtke] attempted to kill every one of them. He went through his entire supply of bullets in a matter of minutes, then grabbed a rifle and started clubbing people with it. A couple of times he tried to settle down, making an ineffectual effort to conduct searches, [but] a minute later he would fly into a rage at the sight of some familiar face. All hell would break loose again, and blood flowed everywhere his arms could

reach. Whereas, from the beginning to the end of the bloody days in the ghetto, the rest of the *Vernichtungskommando* did not stand out in any particular way, Handtke distinguished himself right from the start -- indeed, from the time the *Aktion* was only a few days old... Everyone knew that this was a great beast, a beast by the name of Handtke.

The *Aktion* was not over. Each day, thousands more people passed through the *Umschlag* to the boxcars. Each day, tragedies were spawned in thousands of the Jewish families that remained. The truth about the fate of the Jews who were being sent to the East was slowly beginning to filter through the walls of the ghetto.

/133/ "Julian, Stay home just a little longer."

"I can't, Irenka. I haven't been to the Garden today, and I'm expecting there to be a blockade. You're wearing yourself out. Just look at yourself: you look awful -- all haggard and thin. Your complexion has turned livid."

"You're out on the street from morning till late at night, with shots going off all around. I haven't had a moment's peace since I took up living here. I'm on edge when you come home, because I know you'll be going out [again] right away, and I'm on edge when you're gone -- each time the fear comes over me that you won't be back, that I won't ever see you again."

"It can't be helped, Iruś. You're married to a Jewish policeman, an executioner. This is the price you have to pay

for being safe and sound in a fairly nice room, for getting to sleep on clean sheets and not having to go hungry while thousands [of others] eke out their wretched lives hungry and cold in their dark holes. They live in dread of hearing the footsteps of your husband, who will find them and drag them off to the *Umschlag*."

She placed a trembling hand on his beautiful lips, which were now twisted into a sneer.

"Don't be so heartless towards me, don't talk to me that way about yourself. I know very well that it's not true. From morning to night you risk your life for others. What are you flagellating yourself for?"

Julian, like the majority of policemen, was going through hell. For three weeks without a break he had been taking part in the *Aktion*. Every day brought him new torments that were beyond endurance for his sensitive nature. He was down to his last reserves of strength. Many times during the course of the day he clutched his weary head, in which monstrous images flickered. He was haunted by the thousands of despairing eyes and bowed figures, by the blood that marked the path to the *Umschlag*. He was holding on with the last of his strength, because even if no one was left after he was gone, he knew that he had to stand fast, that he had to keep a clear head in order to cope with his all-too-numerous obligations. He was responsible for dozens of people who would have perished long ago were it not for his protection.

/134/ He was already outside getting on his bicycle when she called out to him through the window.

"Come back for a second."

They met under the archway.

"Julian, don't be angry with me," she said, out of breath. "I meant to keep it from you, but I don't have the right."

"Tell me what it's all about. What's happened?"

"Grisza came to see me a few minutes before you got home. They've taken his whole family away. Lolek's at the *Umschlag*, too. He was looking for you, to get you to save his wife at least."

She clasped him tightly by the arm.

"I'll go only to find her. There are a lot of people there today. They didn't get loaded onto the trains yesterday."

He glanced at his watch -- twelve o'clock; they would not be loading until four.

"Don't worry, Iruś."

"I'm afraid. I knew this was what you would do. Oh, Julian, don't worry -- just remember, if you don't come back... Oh, never mind, I'm just being a baby. Go and save Lola -- it's your duty. I'll be waiting for you at home."

"Look, I'd rather you went to the Garden and warned them to be on the lookout. I've been informed that they're going to set up a blockade in that section. Take your papers with you and wait for me <there?>. Chin up."

Aside from the moral tribulations, each day required a great deal of physical exertion. He rose daily at 5 AM and went over to the Garden, where his father Jakub Traube spent the night. Since the beginning of the *Aktion* he had been working as a laborer for the "*Ostbahn*" railroad. This was one of the most secure jobs one could have... Every morning Julian, fearing some unforeseen development, accompanied his father to the checkpoint at the intersection of Leszno and Żelazna. Just seeing the change that had come over this beloved face caused Julian inexpressible pain. Jakub Traube was about 56 years old and, although he had a youthful face, he was obliged to dye his white hair black. One would have taken him for a grimy factory worker, what with his gray overalls, his black hair and the bag he carried slung over his shoulder. At the gate, by means of various stratagems and with the help of his fellow officers on duty, Julian tried to get his father through the search /135/ unharmed. Jakubowski, Julian's brother-in-law, went out by this same gate, taking Basia along with him. By 6 AM Julian would already be at roll-call, after which the SP would head out for the *Aktion*. He belonged to a platoon of reserve liaison officers, which enabled him to move about from place to place. He kept an eye on the Garden, where a few dozen people were in hiding. There was the custodian Karolka and his wife; Werkmeister, the proprietor of the spinning factory located in the cellar where the cafe's kitchen used to be; and fifteen artists who lived with their wives hidden in the

cafe's workshop. In the summer-house on the grounds of the Garden itself, and in Julian's old office, there lived the doorman with his wife and little Aleks; Genia Braun and her young cousin; Julian's aunt, Janina Pomeranczenbaum?, whose husband had been seized back before the *Aktion* and sent to the labor-camp at Kawęczyn; the well-known stage artist Jonas Turków and a few other persons who had straggled in -- Julian did not even know their names. The moment he got word of a blockade -- or anticipated one -- he would go straight to Mylna Street. The artists and their wives would conceal themselves in the various nooks and crannies of the spacious workshop. A couple of persons would hide at the foot of the walls, which were overgrown with wild vines. A few others would get underneath some heavy gravestones judiciously laid across the gap between a heap of old furniture and some enormous pieces of machinery. Genia, her cousin, Turków, the porter and the porter's family would go in among the tomato bushes, which were tall by this time. Werkmeister and Karolka hid in the attic of the little cottage. If Julian managed to get there before the blockade started, he would look over all the hiding spots, and adjust the positions of the tomato plants and the heavy tombstones. If Julian was not there when the blockade began, his job fell to plucky little Aleks, who would hide last. Whenever there was a blockade in the vicinity of Mylna, Julian always arrived together with the group leader, Stoliński, with whom Julian had struck up a friendship during the *Aktion*. /136/

Stoliński was more than happy to help him. Before the war Stoliński had lived in Słupca. In Warsaw, he had only his wife and parents to look after. His wife was safe and sound in the police barracks, while his parents were hidden in a cellar on Muranowska. He agreed to help when there were blockades on Mylna. The Garden, together with Ostrzęga and Weintraub's workshop, had two exits, one onto Mylna and the other from the rear of the lot at No. 9 Mylna. So everyone just had to hide; Stoliński would stand by one exit, Traube by the other. Taking the full responsibility on themselves, they would bar SP officers from entering. The Ukrainians and the *junacy* often were content with assurances that everyone had already been driven out into the street to join the group [bound for the *Umschlag*], or else they would make a very perfunctory search of the extensive grounds. It was worse when some German got curious about the Garden, and either tried to enter himself or began making threats -- as usual, holding a revolver to the other man's temple... After being assured that the grounds had been thoroughly searched, he would go away. Besides the Garden, Julian kept an eye on every blockade at Többens' "shop," where he had two aunts, Mrs. Wolkowicz and Mrs. Gwajser. For the past two weeks he had been keeping watch over his uncle and his uncle's wife with their five daughters, who were concealed in a good hiding-place in an attic. On Gęsia Street, he guarded the sawmill of the workman Rejngojc together with Rejngojc's wife and son, as well as his good friend Zigfogel, with whom he

had attended engineering school. When the day's "action" was over, he would bring bread round to Mylna and Franciszkańska streets. Every day he obtained sixteen loaves of bread from a baker he had pulled out of a party headed for the *Umschlag*. However, there were days when the *Aktion* raged simultaneously in all parts of the ghetto, when Julian -- unable to watch over all of these places at once and uncertain as to whether anyone had been discovered -- would go to the *Umschlag*, where Szmerling allowed him to stand on duty where the people were counted as they entered. For Julian this was the worst ordeal. /137/ Half the ghetto knew him. He was recognized by his former customers at the Garden, and his name was familiar to thousands of tenants in whose apartment buildings he had directed disinfection raids. When he took up his post to count the people entering in a column six abreast, they would call out to him from all sides. "Mr. Traube, help!" "Julian, sir!" "Mr. Traube, help!" Julian would be counting: "520...540...543. He would turn his head towards those calling out [his name], and to his horror, he would catch sight of some dear face. He could not help everyone. He was gripped by the fear of seeing someone he *had* to save; not only was this fraught with danger, but he did not always succeed. It depended on the mood prevailing at the *Umschlag* for the past half-hour, as well as on the gendarme who was on duty at the gates. If the raids ended early, he would stop by his apartment for a brief meal. Then he would take Irena with him to the Garden and stay there until six o'clock. At

six he would go to get his father, pick him up at the checkpoint and bring him back to the Garden. Then he would return to the *Umschlag* to wait while the party that was to be taken to Dolna Street was sorted out from the rest. Julian would attach himself to the escort. This way he got to pay a short visit to Dolna, where he had found a job for his mother at the beginning of the *Aktion*; for the time being she was in good hands here. Karol was the assistant manager, representing the *Arbeitsamt*. From Dolna, Julian would go back to the Garden. After seeing Irena home, he would ride over to SP headquarters to find out whether there were any further raids going on anywhere. He would get back home only after the curfew hour. This constant running about, and the scenes he witnessed during the day, drained his strength to the point that, in the evening when Irena would leave him alone in the room for a moment to get their supper ready in the kitchen, he would break down and sob like a small child. At night he would wake Irena up with his shouting: "Everyone downstairs! Take nothing with you!" Trembling with anxiety, she would put her arms around him. /138/ She feared for the health of her beloved young man, who during the day kept up such a brave front, affecting the pose of a cynical scoffer and pretending to be unaffected by the scenes that unfolded before his eyes.

"I'll get your wife back," he said to Grisza, whose words were stuck in his throat. "I'd advise you to take a few supplies and find a cellar somewhere. I'll keep watch

over you there. Since Kohn's death your "shop" has been living on borrowed time. Let me know where you will be staying, or come and live with me at the Garden if that suits you."

It took him four hours to rescue Lola. Something kept going wrong. Twice he managed to talk the gendarmes around. The plan was to get her out dressed as a nurse in a white apron, but Lola was so jumpy that a Ukrainian on duty at the *Umschlag* could tell from her expression, her gestures and her hesitant gait that her uniform was a disguise. Twice he tore the apron off her and sent her back. It was only just before four o'clock, when the people were already being herded into the boxcars and the situation looked hopeless -- when the *Umschlag* was full of Germans and the guard had been reinforced -- that Lola miraculously composed herself enough to put on the apron for a third time right in front of everyone and walk calmly past the Germans, who were preoccupied with the groups boarding the cars. She appeared at the gate, where Julian was waiting for her. The gendarme, who had been bribed, pretended to check her Health Department papers.

"You're right <??>. I'll come to see you tomorrow."

"I'll never forget this," said Lola, clasping his hand in both of hers. <She was still brimming with the ghastly emotions of the past few hours.> /139/ Her ears were ringing with the cry of despair from her mother-in-law, sister and Grisza's brother-in-law, who, though they loved her dearly,

when they saw her going out grabbed hold of her arms and tried to keep her from reaching freedom.

When Julian appeared at the Garden, he was greeted by the usual expectant silence. Someone vacated a deck-chair for him; they came and stood all around him.

"The raids are over for today. After they finish loading the boxcars, the Germans are heading for Otwock."

Someone let out a groan. Ostrzega had a son with a respiratory ailment in Brijus'.

"They are going for a couple of hours. They're only supposed to expel those in the town."

"Why were you gone so long? What's happened to Lola?" asked Irena.

"Lola has been restored to her rightful owner. I managed to get her out just a little while ago."

The questions rained down from all sides.

"What's going to happen tomorrow?" -- "What time does the SP have roll-call?"

He answered each of them in turn. The whole time he felt somebody's gaze fixed on him; although a dozen pairs of eyes were directed at him he nevertheless sensed that somebody off to one side was stubbornly peering at him. He turned his head to the right, where he made out the figure of an unfamiliar young man, who kept his bespectacled gaze fastened steadily on Julian. When the latter looked at him, he turned his back, shoved his hands into the pockets of his rumpled trousers and slowly strode out of the summer-house.

"A new addition to the flock?" asked Julian.

"I'll tell you who he is later. First tell me how you got your friend out of the *Umschlag*," Genia asked him. With his characteristic sense of humor he related the history of the past few hours.

"And so Lola returned to her husband, the gendarme got a gold watch, and Officer Traube received 500 zlotys for his efforts. Everything turned out just great," he concluded with a laugh. No one responded to the last statement, except for Trachter, who repeated in a barely audible voice, "Five hundred zlotys. That's a lot of money." In turn, someone else -- as if just /140/ waiting for the opportunity, caught up Trachter's words and began cracking a whole string of jokes.

Genia and Irena exchanged glances, and asked Julian whether they could talk to him for a moment. The three of them went and sat down in the shaded little arbor. After getting better acquainted, Genia and Irena had become fast friends. They felt a close bond between them; they could talk for hours about the most varied subjects.

"<We> have a request to make," Genia began. "We have been through a terrible day today. Aside from the fact that we were worried about you, we found out some horrible things. To be honest, your wife tried to talk me out of this. She thinks we ought to spare you from getting worked up unnecessarily, but I finally convinced her," -- she paused,

seeing the ironic grin lurking in the corners of Julian's mouth.

"You're grinning because I'm getting tangled up in my words and you can't make heads or tails out of this introduction." She pretended to be angry. "You'll understand in a moment."

"Go on, go on. I'm not laughing. I'm just in a good mood, and so long as I have a chance to look at the faces I care about, even if it is only for a few moments, nothing can spoil my mood. So, you have my undivided attention."

"As I was saying, at first we meant to keep this from you, but on second thought I came to the conclusion -- and managed to get Irena to agree -- that it would be better for you to know about *this*. But you still don't know what I'm talking about, so I'll get to the point. You saw that fellow with the glasses? Well, that young man escaped from Treblinka, and he has told us about his experiences. They have left us all in a state that I can't begin to describe to you. I asked this gentleman to share his experiences with you, because you are such an incorrigible optimist -- you make light of everything that is going on around you. For /141/ days I've been urging you to chuck everything and escape with your wife to the Aryan side. I'll go too -- after all, we have friends who would probably help us. You might be able to find a place for your parents. But you are an incorrigible optimist, and even though I have great confidence in your judgment, as you know, it seems to me that

you have been acting frivolously ever since the beginning of the *Aktion*. You think the *Aktion* will end any day now, but I've been bracing myself for the worst and today, when I found out so many terrible things, I became certain that your behavior is insane."

Her voice was bursting with emotion.

"Would you speak to him?"

"Probably some fast-talker, but I can listen to these horrible stories."

"Oh, Julian, for once drop this hideous pretense!" Irena cried out.

"I'm finished now. Be so kind as to tell your protégé that Squad Leader Traube is ready to hear what he has to say."

"Now you're joking again," Genia rebuked him in turn. "Well, you should know that this man <wasn't> all that keen on talking to you. He bears a tremendous grudge towards the SP -- he is filled with hatred for the Jewish Police... In his opinion, the <SP> is to blame for a colossal amount of the misery the ghetto is experiencing. A few hours ago, when he was telling us what he'd been through, I thought about you. Anyway, we all decided that he had to tell the whole story all over again to you. At first he refused to consider the idea of opening up to a police officer. But over the course of a few hours he heard so many compliments about you that he relented."

"That changes things. So tell your protégé that Squad Commander Traube would be happy if he would condescend to tell him of his experiences."

"You're a nasty troll of a man. I don't envy your wife."

"Julian, I'm begging you not to provoke this man. He doesn't know you. /142/ Promise me you'll behave yourself."

"All right, all right. Go on into the summer-house. I'll bring him there right away."

Traube and Werkmeister stood for a long time in silence. The man in glasses inspected Julian from his head down to the tips of his elegant high boots. Around them formed a whole ring of listeners. Although they already knew about Werkmeister's experiences, they were curious to find out what Julian -- on whose protection and point of view they were as dependent as small children -- would have to say. Werkmeister grinned ironically; Julian had a set expression on his face.

"I am told that you escaped from Treblinka. Perhaps you would like to share your experiences with me as well. I am not motivated by mere curiosity or some craving for emotional experiences; what you have been through interests me for other reasons, which I will be happy to explain to you afterward. From the outset I can tell you that my attitude towards you is just as negative as yours is towards my policeman's cap. You're not the first to escape from Treblinka. A couple of others have already come back to the

ghetto before you. I wasn't fortunate enough to get to talk to them."

"<My name is> Werkmeister. By profession <I'm> a highway engineer. I'm 36 years old. Mr. Werkmeister here, the owner of the spinning factory, is an old friend of mine and can attest to the truthfulness of the facts concerning my origins. Just before the war I arrived in Poland from Palestine to pay a visit to my parents, whom I hadn't seen for ten years."

He spoke slowly, with his head hunched down to his shoulders.

"The SP caught me out on the street two weeks ago. From the beginning of the *Aktion* I had kept hidden, even though I had an *Ausweis*. I had a good hiding-spot in the rubble of a bombed-out building. I stayed there with my wife and child, and my parents. I went out for a moment to get some bread for my family. It was quiet on the street. A few steps away from my hideout a baker friend of mine had a bakery. I was just on my way back with the bread /143/ when a blockade started on the street. There weren't any Germans yet; the street was cordoned off by the SP. Two police officers nabbed me. I begged and cajoled, tried to break free, offered them my watch -- I didn't have a lot of cash on me -- <but> they wouldn't let me go. They laid into me with their batons, driving me ahead of them as one of the first victims of the blockade. Our party was escorted to the *Umschlag*. I tried to get out of there. I was stuck at the *Umschlag* for

three days. Twice I managed to hide in the cellar of the building. This way I was able to stay behind until the next day. One day some policemen discovered me. For three days I sent out notes by way of the police to my relatives in town. I asked for money. Three thousand zlotys would have sprung me free. The policemen took 30 to 50 zlotys per note, and didn't bring any answer back."

As his story progressed, Werkmeister's gaunt ascetic face turned ashen, and his voice, which had been calm and ironical at first, quivered with repressed emotion. Those standing around them looked back and forth from the storyteller's lips to Julian's face. Julian sat motionless.

"It took us two days to get to Treblinka. I suppose that what went on in the freight-cars isn't all that important -- people passed out from lack of air and died of thirst."

"Treblinka is only a few dozen kilometers from Warsaw," observed Julian. "How could it have taken you two days to get there?"

"You'll have to put that question to the Germans. It took us two days," he repeated with emphasis. "The train made frequent stops in the middle of a field, for hours at a time. At one of these stops on the second day, the train was surrounded by several dozen Ukrainians, the doors were unbolted, and heavy machine-guns were trained on us as we got out. The unloading went on for quite a while. People helped each other to get down from the high boxcars. The train went

on its way. The field was fenced with barbed wire. The Ukrainians were stationed on the other side of the wire with their machine-guns. In this same field, surrounded /144/ on <all> four sides by forest, stood some run-down buildings -- sheds or barns, or something of that sort. We had been sitting in this open space for two hours when several wheelbarrows loaded with bread and jugs of water came rolling out of these same sheds. The bread and water were given out from behind the barbed wire by Jews. I recognized one of them as a distant cousin of mine. As he was handing out bread, I just managed to catch the words, spoken in a whisper: 'Keep close to the wire and don't budge from this spot.' Right after the bread and water had been distributed a German emerged from one of the smaller buildings. Handsome and elegant: an attractive exterior. He walked towards us nonchalantly, holding a lit cigarette. The Ukrainians lined up the women separately from the men. The children went with the women. We were led towards the woods, and the women and children went with us.

"The German mounted a platform made out of two crates. From a large shed nearby several dozen Jews came out. Some of them were carrying rakes and shovels; the others lined up near the German. The ones with rakes walked past us towards the woods. The German made a signal with his hand. For a few moments the camp was silent. The German began making a speech to us. He spoke loudly and slowly, with the most beautiful German accent I ever heard in my life.

"The first stage of your journey is over. The rest of it awaits you. Before this day is out you will travel onward to the East, to work. For those who are willing to pitch in and work, life will surely be better than it was in the ghetto from which you have been sent. Families will not be separated; you will be given a place to live and good food. You will remain here for a few more hours, until the train comes to pick you up and another convoy of people arrives. In the meantime you will go and take baths. You are dirty and covered with lice. After your baths, you will return here. You will be issued new clothing -- work clothes -- and you will leave what you are now wearing behind. Anyone who has /145/ valuables is to check them with me; you will be given receipts. Women who have no children of their own are to take with them any unaccompanied children there are among you. Women should now take off their shoes. Men, do likewise. Shoes are to be tied together in pairs, to keep them from getting mixed up. When you return from the baths, you will be given soup.'

"The German was done talking, and got down from his platform. One of the Jews standing nearby took his place and translated the whole speech into Polish. When he was finished, my cousin translated it into Yiddish. The German stood there the whole time with a good-natured smile that never left his youthful and appealing face.

"There was a stir of activity in the camp. People were tying their shoes together in pairs. Some of them attached

tags with their names on them. After a few minutes one of the Jews ordered the women to line up for departure. Several Ukrainians escorted them towards the woods. After the women had left, the men were ordered to strip down. Once again they reminded us not to get our shoes mixed up, because we would not receive any others. I had gotten half-undressed when I was approached by a German, accompanied by my cousin. The latter pointed to me, and the German nodded. 'Don't undress,' my cousin whispered to me. He led me towards the exit. With me went another <five> young men, most of them strapping fellows. When all the <rest of the> men were undressed, the Ukrainians escorted them off in the same direction the women had gone earlier.

"The affable German went away. Another one appeared in his place. My cousin took charge of us. First they lined the six of us up <na początku szeregu reszta o krok od nas?>. The German tormented us. For half an hour he flailed us at random with a riding-whip tipped with lead balls. When he was good and tired, /146/ and we were half-dead, he stopped and ordered us to get up. There was one man in our group of six whose eyes were streaming blood. The German shot him.

"Our work consisted of sorting the clothes and other items left behind by each group that went to bathe. There were two hundred of us working, mostly young and vigorous men. We sorted everything separately: clothing, shoes, gold, diamonds, and each different type of currency. In most cases the jewelry and valuable items would be lying right

underneath the piles of clothing strewn about the enormous yard. Each day one or two of us died. The work was hard, and a few of the two hundred would succumb to exhaustion or the beatings. I worked at loading the clothes into boxcars. I have my cousin to thank for landing this job; he was the yard foreman. I worked like this for five days. Once or twice a day the same farce was re-enacted. The likable German would give a speech while the most presentable-looking men among us stood in attendance. Several dozen men would go out with shovels and rakes to the woods and wait for about an hour, while the group went off to bathe. When the yard was empty and the naked men had gone to the bathhouse we got down to work. Everyone fantasized about escaping, but the only ones who could get away were those who had the job of loading the things onto the freight-cars. Each shipment was loaded by a different crew. I alone, thanks to my cousin, got to work for five days in a row. It was only on the fifth day that I succeeded in jumping aboard one of the boxcars where I hid among the clothing. I had with me an excellent tool that I had picked up while sorting through the belongings; I had managed to conceal it without much difficulty. The Germans guarding us didn't care if one of us hid gold or diamonds. Every one of those two hundred workers had things on him that were worth /147/ millions. This didn't bother the Germans. Whenever they killed a worker, or he died of exhaustion, he left behind his clothing, which was subject to being searched

and sorted all over again. Well, how about it -- had enough?"

The summer-house fell silent.

"Please be good enough to continue the story of your escape."

"All right, I will. When I was aboard the freight-car and the train had started to roll, I set to work making a hole of some sort in the wall. In a relatively short time I was able to break two boards and make an opening large enough for me to squeeze through. I made the jump safely enough. It took me several days to walk to Warsaw. The peasants in the vicinity of Treblinka were unwilling to put me up even for a single night. They each gladly gave me food and even money, but they wouldn't hear of me staying for the night, because the regular Ukrainian guards at Treblinka were often billeted on them. All of the peasants in the neighborhood had gotten fabulously rich. For several kilometers round about Treblinka there was a stench of gas and corpses. The local peasants tell of things that sound incredible, but are unfortunately true. When the Jews go naked into the sheds to bathe, they don't know what's in store for them until the last second. The door stands wide open, and they file in calmly. But when the building is full, the doors close and instead of water they turn on gas. The "bath" lasts for about a dozen minutes. There are several of these buildings. Some are constructed in such a way that when the gassing is finished, they tip over, dumping out the bodies. Access to

others can be gained only by means of a hatch. Huge quantities of remains are either burned or buried in enormous pits by the Germans. The remainder goes into vats where the flesh is separated from the bones and made into soap. All the work is done by Jews, who are continuously replaced and supplemented. Huge cranes and earth-moving machinery are at work all around. /148/ They are building a crematorium. New ovens are being installed all the time. Located next to all of these facilities is a labor-camp containing a few thousand Jews, of whom a couple of hundred die every day. The workforce is kept up to strength, however; other Jews arrive at the camp every day. This last information I got from the peasants. Every farmer near Treblinka talked to me of nothing else. In horror they all told the same story. Only the Germans know how many Jews have been killed at Treblinka. Jews get sent to Treblinka from other places besides Poland. At any rate, I only got to see a small part of it."

"Why did you come back to the ghetto?"

The narrator's face flushed crimson. He leaned towards Julian and exclaimed through clenched teeth:

"I've already told you! The peasants around Treblinka wouldn't even let me spend the night. Those I approached closer to Warsaw let me stop overnight, but there was no chance of staying on indefinitely. Before I left every one of them asked me why the Jews were such cowards and why they went to their deaths like sheep. But the most important reason why I came back is my wife, my two-year-old son and my

parents. There was no one left when I got there. Your colleagues had discovered them..."

With these words he leapt up from the deck-chair and stood a moment as if he wanted to lunge at Julian. Julian also stood up. He grasped the other man by both arms and, speaking in a soft voice quivering with barely perceptible emotion, sat him down again in the chair.

"Please sit down, sit down."

Julian lit a cigarette. Someone in the summer-house was quietly sobbing. Ostrzega let out a deep moan. Julian went on smoking for a few moments in silence; he could feel the gaze of more than a dozen pairs of eyes fixed on himself. He felt the sympathy in Irena's gaze, and the friendly warmth in Genia's.

"I would like," he began in measured tones, "to explain certain things to you and to all those present. The entire ghetto is groaning beneath the blows that the Germans dish out to us every day. /149/ From all sides, no matter which way I turn, I meet with threats and curses directed at the SP. For wisdom and eloquence, I find that nothing can top the greeting of some poor Jews who were being taken to the *Umschlag*. It ended with the words <...?> Don't get the idea that I want to defend the reputation of the SP. For three weeks we have been completely cut off from the outside world, and I have been your sole connection and source of information. Since the beginning of the *Aktion*, all of my well-meaning friends, all of you present here, have been

trying to talk me into quitting and turning in my cap.

'Don't get your clean hands dirty.' I didn't do it. I couldn't take off my policeman's cap, and in all likelihood I won't do it no matter what happens. Every day you ask me what's new, and I invariably reply that things will be all right. I've earned myself the label of 'incorrigible optimist,' but nothing could be farther from the truth. I have been deceiving you daily. I'm not an optimist at all. I'm filled with the worst forebodings; I'm virtually certain that it will end in an enormous catastrophe. I tremble every minute of the day for fear that this catastrophe will overtake all of those I care about the most. I can't help it -- I'm an egoist, just like every one of you. But to get back to the SP: the general opinion is that if the SP didn't help, the Germans wouldn't be able to round up so many Jews - - if the SP refused to assist in the *Aktion*, the Germans wouldn't be able to cope. That's nonsense. There was just such a heroic Jewish Police force in Mińsk Mazowiecki. Four hundred policemen, led by their commanders, refused to help with the *Aktion* <there>. The Germans executed them inside an hour, and killed their families the same day -- all told, about a thousand persons. With the help of an enlarged squad of Ukrainians and a few hundred *szaulisi* that they brought in, the Germans carried out the *Aktion* themselves, and Mińsk Mazowiecki is now *Judenfrei*. Who will erect a monument to the heroic SP of /150/ Mińsk Mazowiecki? Somewhere over there in America the Jews, after a good dinner, will say

Kaddish for them in a solemn ceremony, and they'll do the same in a beautiful synagogue. If I'm lucky enough not to get killed by a stray bullet, I'll be the last one to go and I'll have the chance to watch over and save my parents, my wife, two sisters, two brothers-in-law, a couple of aunts, and the rest of you. The majority of policemen are just like me. The SP takes bribes: a person with money can buy his way out of trouble. It's the same old story -- you yourself turned to *Werkmeister*; if you'd had a few thousand zlotys, you could have saved yourself there on the street, you could have gotten yourself out of the *Umschlag*. I see nothing unusual in this. Is a policeman supposed to risk his life for nothing? If you had had three thousand zlotys, you could have found someone willing to risk his life to get you out. You sent notes into town by way of the guards on duty, you paid 30 zlotys up front and you didn't get any answer. That's atrocious. I've seen that routine ever since the beginning of the *Aktion*. A policeman comes to the *Umschlag*, collects a dozen or more letters, takes in several hundred zlotys in payment, and out of fifteen or twenty letters manages to deliver one. Yet I honestly don't know who's more in the right -- the policeman who accepts twenty letters and delivers one, or I, who flatly refuse to take any letters in spite of all the entreaties I'm greeted with the moment I step onto the *Umschlag*. I won't take them, because I don't have the time. The SP does its work more conscientiously than the Ukrainians or the *junacy*. The SP behaves brutally;

it beats people unnecessarily. I do it too -- I whom you all call your guardian angel -- I beat Jews because the victim I beat is safe: the police won't beat him to a pulp or shoot him. And it often happens when Orf, Handtke or Witossek is on the prowl -- the SP beats people, and they're safe. You laugh: it's all baloney, right? I'm perfectly /151/ well aware of the fact that if some American were listening to my arguments, he would think that I'd gone insane. Yet that's how it is. I'm not at all trying to say that the police are a bunch of saints. I make no claim that all of the policemen who swing their batons do so out of humane impulses -- to snatch a victim out of the clutches of Handtke, Orf or some other German. There are plenty of officers for whom the *Aktion* is an opportunity to give free rein to their sadistic instincts, instincts that lie dormant in every person. But let's not forget that the police force is made up of all sorts of people. Let's not forget that back when the ghetto was first being set up, the Germans did their utmost to see to it that the volunteer civic force consisted exclusively of members of the intelligentsia, who at the very least would all be speaking the same language. Let's not forget that at the beginning of the *Aktion* three thousand employees of charitable and social organizations announced that they would take part."

"These people didn't know that they were helping to deport Jews to their deaths," replied Czerski.

"Agreed, Mr. Former Director of JOINT, they didn't know. But do we know -- do you, sir, know for certain that all the Jews are going to the gas chambers? Here is something that I myself witnessed only yesterday. You all know <Remil> from the <Economic Bureau> of the Council, right? Well, Remil works at the *Umschlag*. Officially his work consists of bringing doctors and nurses to the *Umschlag* in an ambulance provided by the Council, and bringing them out again, a couple of times a day. In reality, the doctors and nurses go in and out on foot, and the ambulance is used to get out doctors and other valuable people who have landed at the *Umschlag*. So far the Germans either don't know, or pretend they don't know, what's going on. Well, so yesterday Remil got a postcard in the mail from one of his former subordinates. I read it myself. /152/ It said, among other things: 'The work is hard. I'm with my wife and kids. Some of us are better off than they were in the ghetto.' What do you all have to say to that? People are deeply convinced that we know what we've gotten ourselves into. It's not true. We don't know any more than the average person living in the ghetto. And what if one day we followed the heroic example of the Jewish Police in Mińsk and said, 'No!?' Others would take our places -- the employees of some social agency, or, failing that, they'd dig up some asocial types to do the job. So let's not start pinning the blame on the police; let's look a little higher, to those who run our lives -- to the Germans and our Lord God. But let's leave

the SP alone. Let's put the blame on the cowardice of our society. Why is it that <the Jews> have not yet killed a single policeman? Why does it take only one officer to drag forty men out of a camouflaged room?"

"The Jews don't put up any resistance because they don't know where they're being taken," replied Werkmeister.

"So why don't you go out in the street and tell everybody?" <asked ?>

"Wait a second," interrupted Julian. "I'll tell you why you don't go -- because they won't believe you. The only ones who'll believe you are those who know you, and even they'll be slightly incredulous, since it's beyond anybody's comprehension -- even taking the cruelty of the Germans into account -- that they could go so far as to execute a couple million Jews with chemicals. After all, just a few months ago the rumors started reaching us; we got to talk with some eyewitnesses who had escaped going to the gas chambers. We listened to their stories and then stuck our heads in the sand like a bunch of ostriches; we discounted the truthfulness of a large percentage of what we were told. What way out is there, when you come down to it? 'Czerniaków left us a stern testament -- Czerniaków showed us the way.' 'Czerniaków turned coward,' say others. Both statements are more or less correct. But the most important /153/ conclusion is this: the Germans have decided to annihilate us. Whether that means all of us -- that's the question. The population of the ghetto wastes its time slinging mud and

hurling threats at those within its reach. You yourself, Mr. Engineer, bear a grudge, first of all, towards those two police officers who grabbed you on the street. Then towards those who failed to deliver your letters, and finally towards those who took away your wife, child and parents. It's not my intention to stand up for the SP -- it might have been me who discovered your loved ones. But let it be said, in defense of all these officers, that each of them has his own family, which he risks his life to protect, and that besides his immediate family, he also watches over and protects -- just as I do -- a whole assortment of close friends. I won't go into the numerous acts of heroism performed by the better part of the men in the SP, who selflessly risk their lives. But the community is unaware of this; there is only a small handful of grateful people who can't speak up because they are lying low in cellars -- or who have had a run-in subsequently with other policemen and have gone <po raz drugi?> to the place from which they will never return. Let's not blame the SP. Let's seek the blame closer to home first, among ourselves, and then among our real executioners, and not their assistants. I venture to say that all of those present here could have avoided the current situation. Two years ago, when the Soviets were ninety kilometers from Warsaw, everyone here could have made it to their lines. I don't claim that all the Jews in the GG could have done it, but why didn't those of us go who had the chance? What did we expect from the Germans? My father-in-law escaped to

Russia during the fighting. Before the war he had been one of the biggest importers in Poland; he pioneered the construction of the first /154/ produce-ripening facilities in Gdynia. He was rich. The last few years before the war, his fortune began to shrink as a result of the various kinds of discrimination aimed at Jewish firms. Mr. Milecki could have transformed himself overnight from an importer to an exporter -- he had his own <pardesy?> in Palestine. Why didn't he relocate? He stayed on in Poland. The war broke out. The Germans shot his wife; his daughter died of consumption, and the rest..."

"Yes, yes, the Jews are eternal wanderers and eternal optimists," put in Ostrzega, nodding his head sadly.

"Now the Germans have passed sentence on us -- maybe they did so a long time ago and have just gotten around to carrying it out. Who knows? We won't find out until after the war is over, or when we get to heaven. Every day you ask me what the news is, and I answer you, more or less, with joking expressions of optimism. But I'm lying. For the truth that I surmise and the truth that I have already learned wouldn't do you any good. The most it would have accomplished would have been to make you die several times a day instead of just once. I did everything in my power to keep from frightening you with the horror that goes by the name of Treblinka. The news has been all over town for days, and it's only just reached you today. Maybe it's better this way, maybe you'll understand the gravity of the situation and

do what I've been pushing you to do for the past couple of days. My suggestion to the poor artists <was> that they construct a camouflaged shelter underground on the premises of Weintraub and Ostrzega's stonecutting shop."

At first the artists had been enthusiastic about the project. Then they began to lose interest and procrastinate, putting the work off from one day to the next. It went against their nature to hide underground. Either that, or they lacked the initiative or counted on getting jobs in <Karl Heinz> Müller's "shops." Weintraub came up with a plan for setting up a "shop" that would employ his machinery to turn out whetstones for sharpening knives. They had already started working on this /155/, and had met a few times with Müller's assistant, Dr. Finkelsztejn. He headed the department charged with administering the new federation of "shops" that was to be created. They had already obtained work permits from Müller's firm, and were only waiting to get them stamped by the S.D. They came up with dozens of reasons <not to proceed with the construction of the shelter>. They cited technical difficulties, drew up designs, made measurements -- but would not get down to work. They split into two camps: some were of the opinion that they should register to join a "shop," while others thought that they should wait out the storm -- by going into hiding. To the latter group belonged Śliwiak <Śliwniak?>, Rabowicz <Rabinowicz?>, Turków, Tykociński <Tykoniarski?> and Trachter, who was guided not so much by reasoning as by his

primitive nature and instinct, which told him to hide. The opposing camp was led by Weintraub, who had a mania for organization. He named himself director of the <projected> "shop," with Ostrzega as production manager and Korobko <Korolko?> as *Werkschutz*. His mind was teeming with plans conceived on a broad scale, plans that became a reality. If only he could have come and gone as he pleased, dispensing with Traube's help, he would have been happy. With some reluctance, Julian had been handling matters for them at the *Arbeitsamt* and everywhere they were unable to go for fear of being rounded up.

"The community," <Julian went on,> "sees only the SP, which oppresses them, drags them out of their apartments and takes bribes. No one stops to consider that everything that is taking place on all sides is orchestrated by the Germans -- and has been for years. A monstrous apparatus is at work exclusively on the Jewish Question. The most ingenious and diabolical minds are busily studying the Jewish psyche, our mentality, our temperament and our powers of resistance. This apparatus now knows what we are thinking and what we talk about. They now know how we will behave during an "action"; they know exactly how the /156/ general population, the *Judenrat* and the SP will behave. They have drawn up precise plans for handling the situation, should the SP be foolish enough to refuse to help with the *Aktion*; they have ways of dealing with the possibility that the president of the *Judenrat* might withhold his signature from a

"resettlement" petition. They need the signature for historical purposes -- just in case they should ever have to justify their crimes to the world and render an account of the millions of Jews who were under their sway. For the last two or three years they have been doggedly at work on the Jewish Question, and <just as> doggedly driving us, morally and physically, to the bottom. I had a conversation back in 1939 with a young woman in Skierniewice whose husband was murdered by the Germans. They beat him to death with a poker. The next day two Gestapo officers showed up promising, in exchange for her signature on an affidavit saying that her husband had died of a heart attack, a safe-conduct pass for her and her two children.

"And were any of you aware that ever since the ghetto was first set up, they have been forcing Dr. <Mejer> Balaban to sign Jews' death certificates <? hostorii>? To this day Balaban works two or three hours a day at Brühl Palace. Now Dr. Mejer Balaban isn't just some faceless policeman in the crowd, is he?"

There was a long pause during which nothing broke the silence in the summer-house.

"No one can argue with your conclusions. In my opinion, you've made a pretty convincing case. As far as the SP is concerned, one thing is sure. We have the kind of SP our community deserves. The SP isn't some creature from another planet; it came from our midst."

"Go on, Mr. Traube. After all, you've decided not to hide the truth from us anymore and not to use veiled humor to cheer us up. What is your view of our situation? We have to get all the information we can out of you today, because you never have time for lengthy discussions, and who knows /157/ what tomorrow may bring?"

"I've already stated that your only hope is a shelter. I could be wrong, but I'll try to explain to you why I insist on this idea so much. Today we have made a new discovery. Mr. Werkmeister has told you all you need to know about what 'working in the East' entails. But let's not go from one extreme to the other. Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in the middle: some go to Treblinka, and others to work in the East. Neither alternative is very promising. The situation in the city and the views of those in a position to know -- who quite openly admit that they don't know a thing -- appear to be as follows. The Germans, for now, are keeping their hands off the 'shops.' Right now, after three weeks, the total output of the 'shops' is staggering. The tailor's and shoemaker's 'shops' daily turn out, on a mass-production basis, enormous quantities of uniforms and shoes. At first, everyone thought that the purpose of the *Aktion* was to coerce the Jews into performing forced labor for German factories, but as the number of people deported kept rising this hypothesis collapsed. Nevertheless, we have to consider the possibility that the deportations have two aims, one being to 'resettle the Jews in the East' -- at Treblinka -- and the

other, to drive the <remaining> Jews into forced labor for the German Army. As to why the 'shops' don't offer absolute security, the explanation has to be that the *Aktion* is only in its initial phase -- so much so, that not all of the 'shops' will survive. It seems to me that there are a lot of competitors among the owners of the newly-established 'shops.' And why does the Gestapo tolerate this? What do they have to lose? Maybe a dozen or so Germans will even get rich off the employment-registration fees -- some 'shops' get as many as 5,000 <applicants>. There's another advantage to this for them. In a lot of 'shops' -- whether they get <S.D. approval?> or not -- they have between ten and twenty thousand people per 'shop' right out in the open, in buildings surrounded by fences. All they have to do is /158/ go in and drag them off to the *Umschlag*. So let's stick to the hypothesis that some of the 'shops' will survive, and in them a certain number of people (only the Germans know what proportion) will remain. Only then will the *Aktion* come to an end. The notorious SP will cease to exist, and only then will you be able to go out into the light of day. But as long as the *Aktion* goes on in this chaotic fashion, as long as the Germans <refuse to sign any of the decrees -- though no one believes them anyway -- <? **choc im nie wierzą nie podpiszą pierwszego rozporządzenia**>, the best document to have is a good hiding-place."

Julian stopped and looked at his watch.

"It's time for me to go and pick up my father."

"I swear, Julian's right," said Trachter by way of praise. Even when he was making a sincere avowal, Trachter provoked droll jibes. Everyone relaxed. As Julian was on his way out, the engineer, Werkmeister, came up to him and silently shook his hand. Ostrzega caught hold of Julian and, crushing his lapels while peering into his face, whispered to him:

"Traube, don't spare my feelings. I didn't want to ask in front of my wife. My son is done for, right? I'm an old man, but I can take it. Tell me -- they're going to kill him, aren't they?"

"No, take it easy. I can tell you that they're just going over the town of Otwock. They aren't going to touch the <Willowa> district. I had a conversation just yesterday with Dr. Wielikowski, who assured me that 'Brijuś' is safe."

Julian was not telling the truth. At that very moment, the 4,000 Jews of Otwock were perishing. The sick were shot on the spot; they drove the healthy residents of Otwock on foot <the whole length of the Otwock line?>. The old craftsman thirsting for the "truth" heaved a sigh of relief...

In the courtyards of the SP barracks the so-called "reliable men" with three stars were making an announcement.

"Attention! Attention! Attention!" Tomorrow all personnel are to assemble at 5 AM."

/159/ Julian went to roll-call turning over in his mind a plan for seeing his father off to work and getting back to

SP headquarters before the day's "action" started. Jakub Traube had been working outside the ghetto as a manual laborer for the *Ostbahn* since the beginning of the *Aktion*. This was one of the best jobs one could get. All the workers were certified by the *Arbeitsamt*; they had their passes stamped by the S.D. Although the company was allotted its own workers' dormitories on Zamenhof Street, Julian preferred that his father live at the Garden. He accompanied him every day to the checkpoint and waited each evening for him to return home from work.

He got to SP headquarters with time to spare. The first clusters of policemen were just starting to gather in the street in front of the building. He exchanged greetings with a few of his colleagues. Knots of men were whispering quietly among themselves. They were all apprehensive about the early hour <chosen for> assembly.

"I don't like the looks of today's roll-call," Julian confided to the young group commander with the engaging appearance. They had started working together at the beginning of the *Aktion*, and had had innumerable occasions each day to help each other out. Stoliński's aid was invaluable to Julian, especially when he had to stand watch over the Garden, which was quite extensive and had two entrances. When there were blockades on Mylna Street, Julian closed off one entrance and Stoliński the other. They kept officers of the SP out, taking the full responsibility for this on themselves. The Ukrainians and *junacy* either

contented themselves with a declaration that the premises had already been searched, or made a cursory check. The artists were hidden in various cubbyholes in the sheds belonging to Ostrzęga and Weintraub's stonecutting shop. Then there was Genia Braun and her nineteen-year-old cousin Henryk, who had lost his parents at the beginning of the *Aktion*; he clung to his cousin and would not let go of her for an instant. There was Julian's aunt, Janina Pomer<ancenbaum?>, whose husband had been caught in a round-up before the *Aktion* and sent to the labor-camp at Kawęczyn; Jonas /160/ Turków; Werkmeister and his family; and a few persons whose names Julian did not know. There was the doorman Finkelsztejn, his wife and little Aleks; they would hide in the tomato bushes. Often Julian got wind of an impending blockade. Stoliński always came to help him camouflage the bushes and all the hiding-places. If they could not make it, little Aleks took over Julian's job. For a dozen hours a day he kept a constant watch on the street through a chink in the fence. At the first sight of the Ukrainians, or whenever he heard a shot go off, he would cover up the hiding-places. He would hide himself last.

Before the war, Stoliński lived in Słupca, where he had been a teacher at the *gymnasium*. In Warsaw he had only his elderly parents and his wife to look after. He kept his parents hidden in a cellar on Karmelicka Street; his wife was safely ensconced in the police barracks. He and Julian had known each other since the time they worked for Pepid, but

when the *Aktion* began, other police officers started to form groups of various sizes, which tried to stick together. These groups carried on petty scams, working together and splitting the proceeds. Other groups, according to the mentality of their members, would help one another unselfishly; they came to the aid of the distressed, helped people to escape and conspired to get them out of the *Umschlag*. They did whatever they could, wherever they could, to protect the wretched Jews from the fraud and chicanery of their dishonest colleagues.

"I think we'll be getting a harvest in today. It smells like a big job."

"Ah well, what's the point of speculating and getting all worked up?" replied Stoliński. "Don't worry, pal. It'll all work out somehow."

More and more policemen were beginning to crowd into the area just in front of SP headquarters. Julian looked at his watch: 5:30.

"I'm going to leave you my service book. If you'd get it stamped for me, I might have time to see my father off."

"Sure, go ahead," said Stoliński in agreement.

"In the event that you head out before I get back, I'll catch up with you in town."

At the Garden, Jakub Traube was already waiting dressed in his gray workman's overalls...

/161/ As he did every day, Julian gazed at the altered, beloved face of his father. Jakub was 56 years old, and

though he had a youthful face, he dyed his hair black just to be on the safe side. In his bespattered gray overalls he looked like an indigent factory worker. Reisler was on duty at the checkpoint. With the help of his fellow officers on duty, Julian managed in short order to get his father into the line of people waiting to be searched. He made it through unharmed; in any case, he was not trying to smuggle anything out. He preferred to pass up the <extra> income, rather than run the risk of getting beaten.

"Good-bye, old man."

"Good-bye, son." They parted company as they did every day.

When he arrived at headquarters, [Julian] was surprised to find that there was nobody around. The sentries at the gate informed him that the roll-call was taking place in the rear courtyard. He got there a moment before the report was turned in, and squeezed into his place next to Stoliński. Lejkin received the report from the various commanders. The companies and platoons were drawn up in ranks facing the building, which housed the office now occupied by the Germans. The entrance to the building was reached by way of the other courtyard; Lejkin mounted some steps to a passageway that led to the first courtyard. There was a barely audible murmur of whispered conversation among the men in the yard. Witossek stood looking out with a vacant stare from the window of Szeryński's old office on the second floor. The monocle glittered in his right eye. Szeryński

and Czapliński stood in the next window. Then the windows were empty. The murmur of voices in the courtyard swelled, as in a classroom when the teacher has stepped out... There was a prolonged silence when Lejkin appeared in the first window, with Szeryński and Czapliński standing in the other. Lejkin leaned forward until he was almost lying on the windowsill. His head was all that one could see. Without his ludicrously small torso he looked like a full-grown man. In his right hand he held a baton, with which he struck a piece of sheet-metal several times. "Silence!" he shouted. The hubbub ceased. Twenty-five hundred heads were turned towards the window on the second floor. /162/ Behind Lejkin in this same window stood Witossek.

"Your task today will be a special 'action'."

His voice, as always, had an imperious ring to it. He spoke with beautiful diction, and his face was composed, as if he were arguing some minor case in a court of law.

"On your conduct today will depend your well-being and the fate of your families. It will be up to you whether your families are going to be safe. This day will be a test of your capabilities and your loyalty. Your work today will determine your fate and that of your families. In your hands today rests the fate of tens of thousands -- perhaps of the entire ghetto. The last few days have shown that while a blockade is underway, there are no people on the street and the apartment buildings give the appearance of being vacant. Yet every evening, after the raid, the streets fill up with a

crowd of unemployed Jews subject to resettlement. This state of affairs cannot continue. The authorities will not stand for it. Your task is to liquidate it by the end of this day."

He spoke progressively slower and more loudly, pausing after each word.

"Each officer of the Public-Order Service is required to deliver five persons to the *Umschlag*. You have plenty of time; you may keep working until curfew. You may bring them individually or in groups; it's up to you. You have unrestricted access; you are permitted to open up all locked stores, cellars and attics. You are permitted to take people found out on the street. Any officer who finds more than his quota, i.e., <more than> five persons, shall choose those who are elderly, underage or unfit to work. You have the right to break down the doors of all locked toilet-rooms. You are forbidden to go into the 'shops.' You have the right to commandeer rickshaws, carts and wagons. You will hand over your quotas of people to your superiors -- district commanders and lieutenant commanders -- under my supervision; they will give you receipts. You may escort your people individually or all at once. For each person you bring in you will receive a special card. Anyone who fails /163/ to deliver five persons by the end of the day will be struck from the rolls of the SP."

Twenty-five hundred brains were working at lightning speed.

"We're done for," whispered Stoliński to Julian without turning his head. "Our Garden is doomed."

"Anyone who did not understand something should speak up now."

There was a brief pause filled with a hubbub of voices, but no one had any questions. They all understood. One officer ventured to call out, "The 'shops' are where most of the people are hiding out!" But this utterance did not reach the ears of those on the second floor. Out of their sight, the ruffian received a few punches and did not repeat his observation. Lejkin banged on the sheet of metal again. They all understood.

"I reiterate: you are advised to regard today's assignment with the utmost seriousness. Select the old, the crippled, and those who are incapable of working. Dismissed!"

The windows stood empty. In the courtyard twenty-five hundred policemen surged towards the gate. Julian and Henryk Stoliński were among the last to get out. On Ogrodowa Street one could already hear the banging of rods, crowbars and axes. The ghetto was only just waking up; people were coming out into the streets. The news had gotten around that there were no Germans about. This was true: no one guessed that it was the SP that they had to fear -- the very same SP that often gave warnings in advance of a blockade. People fell unsuspecting into the hands of the police. Officers were already escorting the first, struggling victims to the

Umschlag. Stoliński and Traube ran as fast as they could go; until they got to the corner of Karmelicka Street they were unable to commandeer an empty rickshaw. They decided along the way to get Stoliński's ~~parents~~ elderly parents out and take them to the Garden, where they could keep watch over the whole group together. For the moment they were preoccupied with the fate of the people hidden at the Garden and that of Stoliński's parents; they gave no thought to the matter of rounding up the stipulated quota <of deportees>. Barely two hours had elapsed since Lejkin's speech when they led Stoliński's gray-haired parents through the wicket-gate. They were still /164/ in the process of getting them settled into the summer-house when Genia came running to meet Julian. Her hair was streaming and she had a terrified expression on her face. Throwing herself up against Julian, she clutched his arm convulsively.

"Julian, what has happened over there?" She pointed towards the other wicket-gate in the board fence that separated the grounds of the Garden from the stonecutting shop.

"Julek, what is going on over there?"

At first Julian thought the shouting and police-whistle blasts were emanating from the street. It took him a moment to realize that the shouts were coming from Ostrzega's workshop. In a few strides he was on the other side of the fence; he crossed the little courtyard with Stoliński running up behind him. There was a long pause, and then they heard

<?> coming from within. They opened the door. A tragicomic scene <presented itself> to Julian and Stoliński. In the middle of the stonecutter's shop stood a policeman with his cap off. His glasses had slipped down to the very tip of his nose. With one knee he had the howling figure of some woman pinned down; he was holding onto a man with his left hand and a woman with his right. His face, red from exertion, shone with beads of sweat. He had a whistle clenched in his teeth, and was blowing on it incessantly. On seeing some fellow officers arriving, he heaved a sigh of relief, let the whistle drop from his lips, and released his struggling captives.

"Give me a hand, fellows. There's enough to go around for all three of us."

He was surrounded by a dozen or so artists, who were trying in vain to reason with him. When, however, he saw the stern expressions of the two group commanders, he switched to a tone of formality and donned his cap.

"I request your assistance, gentlemen." Apparently sensing opposition, he cast a meaningful look first at the lapel of Stoliński's jacket and then at Traube's, as if memorizing their badge numbers. The workshop fell silent; one woman was sobbing spasmodically and there was somebody pounding on the gate. The policeman with the glasses raised the whistle to his lips in a challenging manner. Julian clamped his hand in an iron grasp.

"Shame on you, officer," he stammered out through clenched teeth. "We'll help you. Henryk, hop over to the gate," he said, turning to Stoliński who was standing beside him. "Have the caretaker find out who's banging on the gate. /165/ Don't let any of our men come in. Tell them that this place is ours, that there are ten <men> here already."

Sure enough, some police officers -- drawn by the noise of the whistle -- were pounding on the gate. There were four of them. Stoliński's three gold buttons and decisive bearing compelled them to go away. He instructed the caretaker to stand watch at the gate, and posted Turków likewise at the other entrance to the Garden. While waiting for Stoliński, Julian sat opposite the patrolman in the glasses and pondered how to get rid of him. Stoliński returned, and they tried to intimidate him by pulling rank. Yet, although he was quite unnerved, Officer No. 1280 stood his ground. He would not let go of his whistle.

"I'll take down your badge numbers and report them to the right people. You have no right -- *you have no right* -- to stop me. I don't want to lose my badge. I have a family."

Once again he flung himself at the wife of one of the artists. Grabbing her by the arm, he started scuffling again with some of the men, who stood blocking his path. Once more he started blowing the standard alarm signal on his whistle.

"Damn it, knock it off!" Julian managed to restore a semblance of order. He was holding the red-faced officer by

the arm again; the latter kept sputtering, "You have no right to stop me. You have no right..."

"For the last time, will you stop yelling? Just what is it you want?"

"Five people. I want five people."

"Fine, you'll get your five people, but stop your shouting."

He let get of him with disgust. The officer almost fell over, but kept up a steady tattoo: "You have no right! You have no right!"

Stoliński took Julian aside.

"What are we going to do?" he asked.

"What's your suggestion? We have no choice but let him have his five people. Maybe we'll be able to salvage something, but we'll have to give him <what he wants>. Otherwise he'll either bring several of his friends down on us, in which case everyone'll get caught, or he'll inform on us at headquarters, and that'll be the end of you and me. Or he'll do both."

Seeing the uncertainty /166/ and dejection in Julian's eyes, Stoliński placed both hands on his shoulders.

"Julek, you know without me telling you that I think the world of you. I feel just as badly for these people as you do. I've gotten used to them the same way you have, accustomed to keeping watch over them. I have the same feelings for these artists as you, but we have to sacrifice a

few persons to save all the others. He probably knows about the rest of them in the Garden."

Julian drew himself up straight; a hundred-pound weight had been pressing down on him. The group of artists eyed them anxiously. They were startled by Julian's voice:

"Hand over five people to this officer! Well, who's going to volunteer? Śliwniec <Śliwniak?>, Weintraub, Eljasz -- gentlemen, I need to have a word with you."

They went into the corner of the workshop.

"You have to choose five persons from among yourselves." He spoke in a piercing voice, hoarse with nervous agitation. "Today's 'action' is being conducted by the SP. Each officer has to deliver five people to the *Umschlag*. Pick out five persons and turn them over to him."

The artists blanched and stood there speechless. From the other end of the shop, Stoliński could be heard haggling loudly with the patrolman.

"No, I'm not budging. I won't settle for less than five people. I'm not going out on any wild-goose chases -- there's nowhere else to look. Give me my people," he roared, grabbing for his whistle again. At length he got so worked up that he started making threats.

"You are to let me have my people right now. I demand that you assist me, or else I will go to headquarters and put you on report. You have one minute to supply me with five people."

"Oh, shut up!" Stoliński silenced him. "What guarantee do we have that more officers won't come here -- that you won't take your five people and bring others back with you? What right do you have to come here? These are artists -- painters and their wives."

"So what? I have no intention of losing my badge. They take artists, too -- if they don't, I'll bring them back. Give me five people. You better think it over, because if you don't give them to me, I'll report you. If you let me take the people, you can rest assured -- I mean totally assured -- that I won't come back here and I won't tell anybody. I'm an honest man. I'm an attorney. /167/ Let me have the people."

"For God's sake, pick somebody!" the artists moaned. "Maybe you can appease him, Mr. Traube," they groaned.

Julian sprang up like a wounded beast.

"Here, swine!" He grabbed Tykoniarski's <Tykociński's?> sister, the wife of <Fahgenbaum?> (who had been seized at the beginning of the *Aktion*), their four-year-old son, Weintraub's elderly father, and a twelve-year-old boy who ran errands for Ostrzęga.

"Take them, you pig. And don't you dare show your face here again."

Those named by Julian, when they saw that the others present stood with their heads lowered and maintained a stubborn silence, made no attempt to resist as Officer No. 1280 took them out to the street. As he hustled them across

the courtyard to the gate, they kept repeating with despair in their voices: "Mr Traube, why us? Mr. Traube, save us! How could you? How could you? Mr. Traube..." They could still be heard screaming out on the street. With a heavy tread Julian went to the summer-house and flopped like a dead man into a chair. His ears were ringing with the cries of those who had been led away. The despairing gaze of Fejgenbaum's <wife> pierced his brain, as did the wide-eyed look of terror on the faces of the children. Stoliński patted his drooping shoulders.

"Take it easy, man. There was no other way out." He turned to Genia. "How did that swine get in here?"

"I think he climbed over the fence." She sat there horror-struck, her gaze fixed on the unseeing Julian.

"Oh, Julian! What was that! Julian! Answer me!" she begged him with tears in her voice. "Look at me! I beg you not to stare like that. Look at me! I'm sure you had to do it. I mean, it's horrible if you didn't have to."

"Yes, I had to send them to the *Umschlag*. I had to do it, and I'll have to again."

Stoliński cried out, his hoarse voice trailing off to a whisper:

"The fate of the entire ghetto depends on us, although we have to deliver another ten people to <the *Umschlag*>."

"The fate of your families depends on your loyalty."

Stoliński beckoned to Genia. "Get him to snap out of it. He's in a daze," he whispered in her ear.

"'Deliver five persons apiece by evening.' You idiot, ha, ha! I'm in a daze! I'm perfectly alert. Don't worry, I haven't taken leave of my senses yet. You're afraid of me, Genia, and well you should be. I could /168/ still take you as one of my five. Did you hear what that bastard said? That he was an honest man? That he was a lawyer? It's true -- I knew who he was. His name's Plawner. Before the war he was just getting started as an attorney. And do you know how he happened to show up at the Garden? He used to lived with your fellow artist, the painter Finkelsztejn. He found out from him that the painters were at the Garden. If Finkelsztejn had been here with you he wouldn't have dared to come, but Finkelsztejn is at work at Többens' 'shop,' so he gave it a shot and hit the jackpot."

They fell silent all around him. Julian seemed to be in complete control of himself.

"Bear in mind that it's better to be a victim than an executioner, but I'm not going to take off my cap. I'm going to stick it out to the end; I'm going to hang on until the curse is fulfilled and all of you go <to the Umschlag>. Come on, Stoliński, let's go into town to do some fishing. All of you go and hide; get yourselves some hefty sticks and don't let them drag you off. The truth is, you don't feel sorry for the five who went. Their going away didn't have all that much effect on you because the whiff of death went away from you. But I have sent Fajgenbaum's wife to her death, with

the little boy -- what was his name? -- Ezra -- such a dear little boy, Ezra."

Around the summer-house women could be heard sobbing quietly. The men stood with bowed heads, their eyes fixed on the ground. As for Julian, he kept on talking and talking.

"Fight for your lives! So many people go to their deaths like sheep. Come on, Henryk, let's go into town."

"No. We're not going -- you're staying here. I'll go by myself. One of us has to stay. You'll keep an eye on the Garden. I'm placing my parents in your care. I'll go and have a look around, find out what's what."

The sounds of shouting and whistle-blasts came from the street. They cleared out of the summer-house. Mechanically Julian checked the various hiding-places.

"Let me stay in the summer-house," Genia implored him.

"What for?"

"I want to stay with you. Don't say no."

"But it's not safe."

"I'm not afraid when I'm with you."

Julian settled himself into a deck-chair and closed his eyes. He felt Genia's cheek against the palm of his hand.
/169/ They did not speak to each other. The shouting in the street grew louder, then died away. There was no sign of Stoliński. He did not come back until five o'clock.

"Have them all come out -- they can stop pretending to be moles and rats now. It's all over. Here's a receipt for five persons."

From his wallet he pulled out a wad of small coupons similar to the receipts a baker gives for *czulenty*. He counted out five tickets and clapped Julian on the back.

"Here. See, you're taken aback. And my poor old mother has started crying. Don't cry, mama."

He still had the coupons in his hand.

"Give me a hundred zlotys and you can have five tickets."

Julian's eyes flashed. He had guessed right away that Stoliński had pulled off some trick.

"Well, are you going to give me a hundred zlotys?"

"Cut it out. Tell me, how did you do it?"

"There was nothing to it. I went into town to check out the situation. Our guys were hauling people away on foot, in rickshaws, or in wagons if they could get them. I made my way over to the *Umschlag*. In the *Umschlag* plaza, in front of the entrance to the building, there were these tables. District commanders and lieutenant commanders were handing out receipts. Lejkin was buzzing around the place like a horsefly. I turned to Szmerling and told him I was in a jam; I told him that you were expecting me. At first Szmerling roared at me, the way he usually does, and told me to go to the devil, and take my friend Traube with me. But a moment later he called me over.

"Go and stand in front of the *Umschlag*. There are a couple of officers there selling receipts. If you don't get

any, come and see me. I might be able to swipe some tickets off a table for Traube and you.'

"You see, he said 'for Traube' and then 'for you'. An hour ago there were about 6,000 people at the *Umschlag*. After a few minutes I figured out where some of the officers were getting their tickets. Today there were a lot of cases where a patrolman pulled out a whole family from somewhere, and they didn't want to be separated, even though the officer intended to take only five people and leave the rest alone. I got two tickets like this for free, and paid for the rest. On my way back I ran into /170/ Plawner. He begged me with tears in his eyes to apologize to you for him. He already knew that he could have gotten a receipt for twenty zlotys. He wanted to come in person, but I told him no thanks, that he better not dare, because I'd break his skull. And that's the whole story."

"You detest me, don't you, Genia?" <asked Julian.>

"No, I don't. I only feel terribly sorry for you. I feel sorry for our young lives. We'll never be young again. Give me just one smile. See, you can't. And here I thought you were so free. Remember: no matter what you do, you won't forfeit my friendship, because I have faith in you. Remember that you promised me you would stick it out, or you would take your wife and parents and escape to the Aryan side."

And seeing the sadness in his eyes, she added:

"Don't reproach yourself. You had no other choice. You had to sacrifice these five people. You saved the rest, and although this causes you pain and may do so for a long time, you did a very courageous thing. You are very brave, because you assumed the full weight <of responsibility> on yourself. After all, they could have -- they should have -- done it themselves. They could have chosen the same people you did, only they were cowards."

"Genia, talk to them, try to get them to build the shelter I was talking about. Otherwise they're going to die. Weintraub can work on getting his 'shop' set up and approved if he wants to, but they shouldn't put too much trust in documents."

In the courtyard of the police barracks, the duty officers with the three stars were making an announcement: "Attention! Attention! Attention! Tomorrow all personnel will report at 5 AM."

Once again Lejkin was leaning on the window-sill; once again twenty-five hundred police officers gazed intently at the window. On this day, as well as on the next one, Lejkin made a solo appearance.

"Today each of you will deliver six people to the *Umschlag*. The receipts you obtained yesterday will be verified tomorrow. As you did yesterday, search out people unfit to work where they are. The 'shops' are off-limits. Likewise, municipal offices, orphanages and boarding-schools are off-limits. Don't try to take the easy way out by

bringing to the *Umschlag* people whom I will only have to release afterward. /171/ This creates chaos and disorder. Dismissed!"

The SP set off into the city. Two German cars patrolled the ghetto. They tore around the streets in a furious rush, neither interfering in the "action," nor stopping. From time to time they would turn into the *Umschlag*. Each time, Szmerling would report the count to them. The count was unsatisfactory. On this day only a minuscule number of policemen were able to sign for their six receipts. Others had one or two persons apiece; the vast majority, none at all. The past day had left gaping holes in the families of SP officers. The men were too preoccupied with safeguarding their loved ones to carry out their jobs. On the first day they had delivered more than 10,000 people to the *Umschlag*. On the second, it was about 2,000. On the first day they had been convinced that their role would end with a one-time "action." On the second and third days, they arrived at the conviction that they should not be doing this. They had been impelled, on the first day, by a collective reflex: each officer felt certain that a one-time effort was being demanded of the force, in exchange for which they would get to keep their badges and preserve their loved ones in safety. And each of them, to secure these things, made this effort, placating his conscience with the thought that the Germans would have found a way, even without the SP's help, to catch the people they wanted to deport. The men were reassured by

Lejkin's admonition to bring in people unfit to work where they were, people who could not expect to be supported under the new regime in the ghetto. However, when next day the officers saw that they had been assigned the role of powerful dogs meant to attack their weaker fellows -- only to be finished off themselves later on by still stronger animals -- they revised their thinking. No one agitated among them; no one plotted with anyone else. Yet even though they knew that there were plenty of people, that they could easily furnish six persons apiece, each officer swiftly calculated that when the Germans conducted an "action" with their own teams and the SP, they collected about 4,000 people, on average, per day; whereas, in the course of a single day, the SP themselves had delivered 10,000. This total, together with the fact that it was not a one-time assignment, appalled them. No one tried to incite them, /172/ yet they all realized that they had been duped. On the second day, the SP brought about 2,000 people to the *Umschlag*. The speech that Lejkin gave on the third day differed from its predecessors only in one respect: he required them to deliver three persons each.

"Your receipts will be verified tomorrow," he concluded. They were not verified the next day, nor the day after that -- they were never verified at all. The third day produced the same result as the second: two thousand people. The fact that headquarters made no effort to spur them on led to speculation that the end had been reached, that the SP's

"special action" was the final stage of the deportations. The calm manner in which the Germans accepted the results of the SP's first two days of work gave rise, towards the end of the third day, to a mood full of hope. There was a general lessening of tension, just as had happened in the early days of the *Aktion* when some lunatic spread the glad tidings that the campaign was over. Granted, no one rejoiced the way they did on that occasion -- there was no kissing and hugging in the streets -- yet that evening the dominant mood was one of miraculous expectations. This mood was fortified by the news that the SP did not have to report for roll-call the next day until 7:15.

Then came the morning of August 18th, and the days that followed, full of screaming and gunfire. The *Aktion* was stepped up, and the chaos was such that the situation defied logical analysis. Only one thing seemed certain: extermination. The boxcars collected each day -- or on rare occasions every other day -- five or six thousand people. What seemed a sure bet one day burst like a soap bubble the next. In the ghetto new notices went up, calling for volunteers, and each day the hopelessness of the situation and the starvation brought them to the *Umschlag*. Their travel ration had been cut; instead of three kilograms of bread and one kilogram of marmalade, they now received a kilo of bread and a quarter-kilo of marmalade. The Germans changed their procedures in a way that contributed to the desperation and chaos: the *Aktion* was no longer carried out,

as it had been previously, only on a few sections of street at a time. The blockades were no longer a matter of closing off a single street for a few hours; now they were shifted /173/ from place to place. They encompassed a widening list of streets -- as well as the "shops." Selections were seldom made in the street; they herded everyone off, frequently emptying huge factory floors down to their last worker. It was only when they were at the *Umschlag* itself, shortly before they were to be escorted to the boxcars, that some German assisted by two others would glance at their papers and let a few thousand of them go. Other times they would carry out the selections just before the gates to the *Umschlag*. There were days when 10,000 people would be brought to the *Umschlag*, and 6,000 of them would be released. Twelve thousand would be brought in, out of whom 4,000 would go free. They introduced a savage system that no one could explain. For a number of days the freight-trains would come every other day, sometimes every third day. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of people would pass through the *Umschlag* building. They would be taken to the *Umschlag* but not loaded onto the trains. The *Umschlag* would fill up with swarms of people waiting for the selection-process with their *Ausweise* clutched in their hands. The boxcars would arrive, pick up four, five, or six thousand people, and leave the rest. More people would come, and go through a new selection. For three days there would be no trains for them to be loaded into. New columns of people would appear all through the day; they

would be counted and selections made. Some would be freed -- their documents clearly helped. Some would arrive; others would go free. The *Ausweise* helped, but with the very same *Ausweis* some got to leave while others went to the boxcars. They would drive 6,000 to the *Umschlag* and set 8,000 free. The *Umschlag* was constantly filled with people; it no longer emptied out as it did formerly. At one time there would be 5,000 -- even 12,000 people; the boxcars would take only 6,000. It seemed as if they wanted to habituate the remaining residents of the ghetto to the sight of the *Umschlag*. In fact, it not infrequently happened that people would wind up at the *Umschlag* a couple of times in the space of a fortnight, and go free. No one knew what worked and what did not -- what documents could be counted on, or which "shops" were most likely to be left untouched. The groups of people being escorted to the *Umschlag* now changed in appearance. The columns under escort walked along quietly; they no longer wept or cried out, but strode along with even steps, each person /174/ with documents in hand. They would be on the lookout for the selection-process, which would often take place a few hundred meters in front of the *Umschlag*; next they would watch for the selections to be made right before the gate. Then it might occur at any time at the *Umschlag* -- or shortly before they were marched off to the boxcars, en route to the boxcars, or even as they were boarding. They entered the boxcars spasmodically clutching the precious documents on the strength of which they had gone

free two, three -- in some instances, five -- times. Even inside the boxcars they craned their necks, in case someone called out the name of the firm listed on their papers. Only the screeching of the doors as they were slammed shut and the wailing of the whistle as the train lurched forward dragged them back to reality, taking away their hope and carrying them off into the unknown. The bold and enterprising among them sawed through the walls and floorboards of the boxcars; they would make holes and leap out. Each such train had an escort of Ukrainians, for whom the last car was reserved. People would jump off, breaking arms and legs or fracturing their skulls; the Ukrainians would shoot at them. Some would fall down dead; others would get up, dragging their crippled limbs. They would approach the peasants, who would be kind and give them something to eat and drink. On rarer occasions, they would permit them to spend the night. The daring ones returned to the ghetto. They would be lucky not to fall into the clutches of blackmailers who, if they did not receive payment, would turn the poor wretches over to the police.

The manner in which the *Aktion* was conducted had changed; the appearance of the parties escorted to the *Umschlag* had changed; and the appearance of the *Umschlag* itself had also changed. The building looked splendid and fresh only from the outside. Inside, it produced the impression of being one great cesspool. Many toilets were clogged up; water ran incessantly from broken faucets and

spilled from clogged sinks onto the floor, where puddles of sticky thick mud formed. Thousands of people tramped continuously through this muck. The building exuded a nauseating stench for a couple of hundred meters in all directions. This state of affairs worsened steadily. The special cleaning details did no good; nor were the constant exertions of the plumbers much use. The filth, the stench and the muck increased along with the number of victims passing through the *Umschlag*. /175/ Whereas, previously, people considered themselves fortunate if they managed to stay on at the *Umschlag* until the next day (they had had to be driven out of the building by force, with beatings and gunshots), now when the order came to go out to the boxcars, the poor wretches would quit the building en masse just to get out into the open air -- if only for a few hundred paces. Then they would land in their new cages, the boxcars, where eighty to one hundred and twenty people would be packed into a space designed to accommodate a dozen cows. Staying at the *Umschlag* became even more unbearable when one of the buildings was detached for use as a hospital. The Jewish hospital located in the <former> Bureau of Taxation on Leszno continued to function on the depopulated, odd-numbered side of the avenue for only a few days. Then came an order directing that the patients be transferred to one of the buildings at the *Umschlag*. Over the course of two days, approximately 2,000 patients were conveyed, along with the hospital's equipment, in wagons, trucks, handcarts and

rickshaws. At first it was feared that the sick were to be deported; for some unknown reason, the news that they were being taken to the *Umschlag* came as a terrible shock. In all likelihood this was because the remaining residents of the ghetto still nurtured the belief -- in spite of everything -- that the deportees were being transported to the East to work. The optimists -- whether by conviction or compulsion -- heaved a sigh of relief when it turned out that the sick were being allocated one of the buildings of the *Umschlag*, which was transformed into a hospital in a couple of days. On the other hand, the deportees were worse off, losing half of their space. The crowding and squalor in the buildings became so insupportable that there was no alternative but to leave those who could not be accommodated indoors out in the courtyard; the sentry-posts were reinforced accordingly. The Ukrainians stood guard day and night along the wall separating the *Transferstelle* from the *Umschlag*; they guarded the plaza in front of the complex at night. Barbed wire was strung across the plaza so as to leave only a broad corridor for the groups entering the *Umschlag*. This made it easier to count the columns of people as they came in; it also foreclosed all possibility of escaping /176/ or smuggling anyone undetected to the outer gate: since one half of the plaza was virtually empty, aside from the SP officers on duty, any figure that showed up dressed in civilian clothes stuck out like a sore thumb. The hospital staff and medical officers came in a few times a day in tightly-packed columns,

checked each time by Szmerling or a "reliable man" acting in his name. Szmerling bore overall responsibility <for the *Umschlag*>. The Ukrainians were there only to stand guard; they had no authority to interfere with any operations whatsoever during daylight hours. Szmerling enjoyed the confidence of the Germans, who put him in charge of maintaining law and order at the *Umschlag*. Consequently, as the *Aktion* wore on, there were constant improvements. A permanent guard-crew was designated for the *Umschlag*; granted permission to choose the men, Szmerling availed himself of the opportunity by selecting several dozen former officers of Pepid. The new unit served exclusively at the *Umschlag*; no other SP officers were permitted beyond the barbed wire without Szmerling's authorization. On the positive side, this change put an end to the various schemes of unscrupulous officers. The other side of the coin was that it made it impossible for officers who did not belong to the special unit to rescue their relatives. The ambulance disappeared: Orf had caught it in the act of ferrying ten persons, whom he shot. The number of individual rescues declined, together with the number of casualties among the police officers, who often paid with their lives for trying to smuggle family-members out during the day with the connivance of corrupt gendarmes. The guard contingent at the *Umschlag* behaved in very comradely fashion, helping other officers to extricate their kin. This is how it was done: the officer who wanted to get his mother, brother or father out would leave his name

and the money needed for bribing the gendarmes, the Polish policeman and the Ukrainians. A couple of "specialists" would take it from there, employing a novel method: they would escort several dozen people to the building at No. 3 Dzika Street nearby, where /177/ the caretaker, who was in on the plan, would hold them until morning. That is why members of SP <families?> who were expecting help from the outside tried to make sure they were among those who did not get swallowed up by the boxcars, and who would have to wait overnight. But this was a matter of chance and good luck. Not everyone succeeded in maneuvering himself into the last group. The Ukrainians who drove the parties to the boxcars from the *Umschlag* had not changed their ways. Sometimes they left the cellars <of the *Umschlag* complex> untouched, sometimes the upper floor; at times they left half of the people in the courtyards behind. This is why the SP officers who had missed the opportunity to get their relatives held over for the night made appeals to the authorities as their family-members were being led to the boxcars. Because such pleas often ended in death, the SP command prohibited them; violations were punishable with the loss of the officer's badge, and other sanctions. However, the ban was so preposterous in its formulation, and the sight of a man's father going to the boxcars so terrible, that the son who walked by his side as part of the escort -- though he had little hope of success and placed his own life at risk -- could rarely restrain himself from making an appeal. Every

officer knew that the moment he walked up to any German present during the loading of the cars might well be his last, yet how could he not make the attempt? All the more so, if one takes into consideration that -- despite the ban issued by the SP, which stressed that it had acted on orders from *Untersturmführer* Brandt -- Brandt himself had repeatedly set free the relatives of SP officers. For this reason, the appeals went on unabated, notwithstanding the casualties.

One could have drawn the impression that, ban or no ban, the Germans welcomed the policemen's supplications. They took some kind of special pleasure in prolonging the petitioner's agony. Had even one of them merely adhered to a consistent pattern -- had it become generally known that a German (Michelson, say) rejected all pleas out of hand, inflicting the death penalty on the petitioner or ripping off his armband and ordering him to join his father or mother in the boxcars -- such a German would not have been bothered anymore. However, the same German who shot an SP officer for interceding with him a moment earlier would pack the next one into a boxcar and let the third man go free. And every one of them /178/ did the same thing, letting some go, shooting others, and driving still others to the boxcars. Even at the height of the traffic and confusion that often prevailed near the trains, he would always have time for an approaching SP officer. He would listen at length as the other implored him in a whisper; his attention would focus particularly on the repeated words: "my mother...please release my mother to

me...this is my mother..." He would peer searchingly into the petitioner's face, bathed in a cold sweat; he would gaze into the eyes burning with fear and uncertainty. He would reach a decision, blunt and irrevocable, terrible or heartening to two people -- the escort officer and his mother. When he had more time at his disposal, or if he just happened to be in the mood, he would embellish his decision with a sadistic little scene. Officer Owczyński, the son of the well-known jeweler, made an appeal on behalf of his mother. To his joy, he received permission from Orf to fetch his mother from the very steps of the boxcar. The son took his mother by the arm. Suddenly Orf changed his mind and summoned Owczyński, who let go of his dear mother and stood at attention before the German. "I will release your mother to you, if that is your mother. However, I don't believe you," he said, boring into the man with his <jasnym metnym ??> eyes. "In all likelihood this is some stranger" -- he pointed at the neatly dressed old woman -- "who has paid you a bribe." Owczyński tried to protest, but Orf cut him off. "I will search you," he said slowly, looking him in the face; Owczyński turned pale. "If it turns out that you don't have any money, well and good, you'll get her. Otherwise it's a bullet in the head." Orf found 4,000 zlotys on him. Owczyński's attempts to explain that the woman really was his mother were futile. Orf shot him -- in the back of head, as was his practice -- right before the old woman's eyes. Even more typical was the manner in which Group Commander

Minkowski perished. He had been an officer of gendarmes in Germany before Hitler's time; the Germans themselves had wangled a post for him in the SP. After his arrival at the Warsaw ghetto, Minkowski had followed the German Jews' custom of wearing the gold German star with the letter *J* in black. He kept /179/ this star after joining the SP. One day his entire family wound up at the *Umschlag*. He wanted to save at least his sister. It happened to be a day when there were few people at the *Umschlag*, and his family had landed in a party being brought in from the street, by way of the second gate, straight to the boxcars. Saving all of them was out of the question. Minkowski ran into Witossek, who would not let him say a word. Pointing at the gold star, Witossek asked, "Where did you get the policeman's cap?" Minkowski's explanations got him nowhere. Witossek took away his cap, armband and badge, and ordered him into a boxcar. From some distance away, Lejkin came at a run, hopping comically on his stubby legs. Feeling that his salvation was imminent, Minkowski let out a sigh of relief. But Lejkin got there too late. Witossek changed his mind, whipped out his revolver, and shot the terrified officer between the eyes. "He was a real policeman," Lejkin said reproachfully. "*Schade*," said Witossek. "Why was he wearing that star?"

The increasing number of incidents of this sort forced the SP administration to crack down still harder on the men under its command. When these measures failed to accomplish anything, the work-procedure of the force was overhauled. In

addition to the permanent guard-crew at the *Umschlag*, a special unit was set up. Called "loaders," the twelve officers, with Lieutenant Commander Brzeziński in charge, had the sole assignment of loading the boxcars with people. Shortly before each trainload was despatched, the Germans gave Brzeziński the figure for the number of people to be put in each boxcar. The parties were brought in from the *Umschlag* by the Ukrainians and the permanent SP crew. Patrolmen not belonging to the crew were forbidden to go beyond the barbed-wire barricade dividing the plaza. On sporadic occasions Lejkin was authorized to allow a single officer to go in among the deportees.

There were still other efforts to intervene. Germans -- the owners of "shops," the managers of various departments, *Werkschütze* -- interceded on behalf of Jews. Szmerling held overall responsibility /180/ and was under orders not to hand over a single Jew, not even to a German general or any other high-ranking officer not belonging to the <self-proclaimed?> *Umsiedlungskommando*. He found himself in a hopeless situation. Germans in uniform would come to the plaza, only to find their path barred by a Jewish sentry standing at the barbed wire. Never mind that the figure looming before them was powerfully built and imposing -- he was still a Jew. Some of the Germans accepted the sentry's explanation that it was forbidden, that he had orders from Michelson himself not to turn anyone over. However, there were also others who paid no attention and casually brushed the man aside.

Brandishing their pistols in a menacing fashion, they would take away several people -- often several dozen. Szmerling had to report these incidents, and did so, to the indignation of his German superiors. They in turn would make threats with their revolvers, but he was powerless <to stop the depredations>. The Germans had made him commandant of the *Umschlag*, and in their naïveté -- despite their peculiar attitude towards the Jews -- they failed to understand how anyone could dare to disobey their orders, even if they were relayed through the mouth of a Jew. Yet their power was so vast that henceforth there were no further such incidents, even when a senior officer sought the release of but a single person. Indeed, on one occasion this resulted in a heartrending episode. A certain admiral drove up to the *Umschlag* accompanied by several officers. As usual whenever a German vehicle appeared in the plaza, Szmerling walked up to it. The admiral, an older man with a pleasant and kindly expression, drew out a notebook and gave Szmerling the last name of a Jewish woman and her child. "A little girl," he added, indicating with his hand that she came up just above his knee. Standing at attention, Szmerling courteously informed the admiral that he was not authorized to release the Jewish woman, and suggested that the officer apply to Major Höfle at the *Befehlstelle*, No. 101 Żelazna, or anyone from the *Umsiedlungskommando*, about obtaining written approval, if he seriously wished to get the woman out. The admiral grinned in disbelief.

"I'll leave you my name. . Would that be sufficient?"

"<Nie pańskie /181/ nazwisko jest mi potrzebne jeżeli pan mi je da w celu udowodnienia właściwym władzom, że pan zabrał Żydówkę siłą, w tym celu pan usunął posterunki żydowskich policjantów i ukraińców i sam wywoła[ł?] nazwisko poszukiwanej. ??>

The admiral's eyes popped out in astonishment. "Has this Jew take leave of his senses?" <he wondered.> But no, Szmerling did not look like a madman. Neither his pronunciation, stiff as it was, nor his diction gave one such an impression. As the conversation dragged on, the two other officers emerged from the car. One was an army major, the other a captain.

The hour when the people were to be herded into the boxcars was fast approaching. Mende rode into the plaza on his bicycle, and pulled up next to the luxurious sedan. He saluted; the officers paid him scarcely any heed. "That's one of the gentlemen from the *Umsiedlungskommando*," Szmerling told them. The admiral turned to Mende and nonchalantly informed him that he wished to take a Jewish woman and her child away from the *Umschlag*, but that this big Jewish policeman was being obstinate.

"Surely you have no objections?"

Planting his legs far apart, Mende stood switching the tops of his stiff military boots with his riding crop. He listened to the admiral's explanations, and was clearly amused by the other man's crestfallen mien when he shook his

head in reply: "*Unmöglich*, it is not permitted." At a certain point, with the admiral still going over his reasons and demanding an explanation, Mende walked away from him and gave the order to the commander of the Ukrainians to herd the people to the boxcars. The barbed-wire barricade was a few meters from where the admiral stood. The lacework of wire formed a small window in which the head of a little five-year-old girl was visible. She had a rosy, tear-streaked face and blond curls cascading onto her spare shoulders. With one hand she held onto the dress of her mother (an attractive young woman), with the other she tugged at the wire repeating over and over, "Mama, the admiral, the admiral /182/ has come to get us, to get you. He'll take us away. Mama, the admiral."

Meanwhile, the admiral felt the ground giving way before him. Mende issued a couple of orders and everything was set in motion, as if a switch had been thrown on some diabolical machine. Up to this point the *Umschlag* had been peaceful, merely assaulting one's nostrils with its stench and striking one's ears with the even murmur of a few thousand voices, those of the densely packed crowd of people. Now it thundered with gunshots, shouting, weeping and moaning, the roaring of the beaters and the beaten. Mende returned and stood near the admiral ready to listen to him further. The admiral talked, pleaded, flew into a rage. Mende placidly denied his request.

The admiral gave an order; Mende smiled calmly. The people by the barbed wire were the first to move. As she and her mother were walking past the admiral, the little girl stopped and knelt down, pulling her mother down with her. The woman dropped heavily to her knees; she clasped her hands convulsively between her knees, her head drooping low. Mother and daughter knelt there, while the dense wave of people passed by. The admiral saw them and said something. Mende smiled and kept silent. The admiral reeled; the <two> officers held him up and guided him unobtrusively towards the car. He collapsed heavily onto the seat and covered his face with his hands.

"Mommy, the admiral has gone away without us." The little fair-haired girl stood up. "Come on, Mommy. Everybody's going now."

These interventions on the part of Germans caused Szmerling endless headaches until Becker acknowledged the justice of his claim that there was simply no way he could prevent such episodes from occurring. With an inscrutable smile Becker -- who had himself upbraided Szmerling for allowing some SS-man, an outsider, to take more than a dozen people out <of the *Umschlag*> -- promised him a present that would ensure that there would be no repetition of incidents of this sort.

At first, Szmerling was alarmed. Brzeziński, who often assisted him when he was not busy loading the trains, joked that Szmerling was going to get /183/ a revolver. Becker's

"present" took the form of a signboard announcing in bold letters: "Persons of German origin, both civilians and military personnel, are prohibited from intervening on behalf of Jewish deportees. All willful attempts to remove people without the approval of the *Umschlag* administration will be severely punished. [Signed,] the *Umsiedlungskommando*." The sign was put up in a prominent location. The interventions continued, but each incident ended with the intercessor being directed to the *Befehlstelle* at No. 101 Żelazna, where a few of them managed to obtain written permission to take several or more persons, specified by their exact names, away from the *Umschlagstelle*.

The *Umschlag* and the whole tragic procedure had become a precisely functioning machine.

The crushing gears meshed together perfectly; there were no intervals or gaps through which the multitudes of unfortunate Jews might slip so as to escape their fate.

The loading of the people into the boxcars no longer presented the tragic spectacle of earlier days; it had taken on the dreary solemnity of a mass funeral procession with an established ritual. It required the presence of only two Germans to ensure that the procession advanced, in ranks of five, with perfect order and the silence of the grave. The column, a couple of thousand strong, would march to the head of the train. A "loader" would set up the portable steps in front of a boxcar and board it. There, depending on his instructions, he would count off eighty, one hundred, a

hundred and twenty people. When the boxcar was full, they would seal it shut and move on to the rest of the twelve cars. The number of people loaded, whether it was eighty or a hundred and twenty, produced the same tragic result -- in spite of the deception practiced by the "loaders," who did not meet their quotas. The "loaders" perpetrated a hoax: /184/ instead of eighty persons per boxcar, they would load seventy or seventy-two; instead of one hundred and twenty -- one hundred and fifteen. Similarly, the guards who counted the people on their way into the *Umschlag* would invariably report a higher total than the actual figure. The SP officers who engaged in these risky "embezzlements of souls" thought that by this means they were reducing the number of victims (the balance-sheet for the ongoing *Aktion* gave a substantially inflated figure for the number of deportees). Only later on did it become clear just how naïve these calculations were.

Although the *Aktion* went on unabated, there was every indication that a certain portion of the Jewish populace would remain in the ghetto. Assurances to this effect came from the owners of "shops" who had enormous contracts and who received huge supplies of raw materials to keep pace with their rising production. At this time, the word went around that the Germans intended to leave ten percent of the Jews in all of the ghettos of the GG. Calculations were made on this basis. Using the number of ration-cards issued to the residents of the Warsaw ghetto, the Germans came up with a

total figure of 600,000 inhabitants, whereas in reality there were only about 530,000. The remainder were deceased persons, whose deaths had been kept secret by the Provisions Board so as to increase the food allotments. The ten-percent formula, applied to the figure of 600,000, meant that 60,000 people might be left in the ghetto. However, since the real figure was only 530,000, the Germans would end up deporting everyone and still be 10,000 people short. That the numbers led to this tragic result did not especially worry anyone. In the ghetto there were still about 300,000 Jews; their plight was such that the plan for leaving 60,000 amounted to total annihilation. Three hundred thousand Jews were left in the ghetto, but there was not one family that had escaped the misfortune of losing a loved one. No family was wholly safe. If one member worked in a "shop," /185/ it would be one that was not immune to raids; if he and his wife both worked, but had children, he had to reckon on losing them. It was common knowledge that the ghetto would continue to exist in one form or another, and with a certain number of Jews in it -- only those who had jobs. Jews over fifty and Jewish children under the age of fourteen were irrevocably doomed to be deported.

The *Aktion* raged on, enveloping in its tentacles those who were in hiding as well as more and more of those who thought they were safe. The entire Provisions Board went to the *Umschlag*; only a few top officials were spared. More than a dozen "shops," both large and small, saw their workers

go to the *Umschlag*. These were "shops" with fully equipped production floors, to which their registered workers had transferred their own materials and machinery; scores of these workers already had papers certified by the *Arbeitsamt* and stamped by the S.D. In "shops" heretofore officially recognized there were more and more blockades and selections, which inflicted wounds that would not heal on the workers' families. They took away mothers <who looked older than their years>; they took small children away from their mothers. Every day a few thousand people made their way to the *Umschlag*: workers from a "shop" that had been liquidated; site-workers employed by a German firm on the Aryan side; a few hundred persons netted in the street blockades or caught in Aryan residences; <another> few hundred taken during a selection at an officially recognized "shop"; the children of a boarding-school. To the *Umschlag* went the staff of the *Eildienst*, with the director at their head. Their services were no longer needed. The deportation machine was functioning flawlessly. A new team of auxiliaries, in the form of three hundred *szaulisi*, now arrived in the ghetto. The ghetto's thunderstruck residents bowed their heads in submission.

Yet even without the help of the *szaulisi*, thousands more went to the *Umschlag*. No one was safe; no document could be counted on. Whether a person ended up at the *Umschlag* was a matter of chance, and survival was a question of luck. /186/ Szmerling and the *Umschlag* crew made

superhuman efforts, every day and night, to save valuable individuals. The Germans did not care how valuable those who went to the boxcars were -- for them every living being found in the ghetto was a detested Jew. Risking their lives, Szmerling and his crew strove each day to rescue more than a dozen persons who made up the very marrow of society, persons who had devoted a lifetime of creativity and work to others. Every day they plucked out a few of the most important doctors, writers and journalists, or a well-known artist. It was impossible to save them all; no one could say whether a person who had been saved would remain so for long. Not all of those to whom "salvation" was offered would agree to return to the ghetto. Marysia Ajzensztadt, the nineteen-year-old singer nicknamed the "nightingale of the ghetto," for whom a great future as an artist had been predicted, arrived at the *Umschlag* with her father and Professor Rozenbaum, who had trained her and accompanied her during numerous performances. Marysia Ajzensztadt was known to all the residents of the ghetto; both connoisseurs and amateur music-lovers knew her and were entranced by her beautiful, pure voice and captivating charm. She showed up at the *Umschlag* shortly before the boxcars were to be loaded. One of the policemen reported this fact to Szmerling. He agreed to hide her in the hospital building while the train was loaded, but she herself, when the beaming officer proposed the rescue scheme to her, would have none of it.

"If you can get me out together with my father and my professor, fine. If not, then I'll go with them." She was arm in arm with both men, her gray-haired old father and the handsome professor. "I am very, very grateful to you," she said with emotion, "but we cannot be parted. I've already lost my mother and my brother; this is all I have left."

The party headed towards the boxcars, and Marysia Ajzensztadt went with it. Brandt and Witossek were present at the boxcars this day, and the path leading to the train was patrolled by /187/ Bogudt. He stood right next to the marching column, which was enclosed on both sides by a sparse cordon of Ukrainians and SP officers. The heat this day was unbearable. As usual, Bogudt had the sleeves of his uniform rolled up high and, as usual, he held in his hand a long leather riding-whip. The party was moving along quietly, drawing closer to its destination with each step. To pass the time, Bogudt again and again picked out someone's head and brought the whip whistling down on it with all his strength. He would strike only once, and then calmly and precisely note the accuracy of his blow and the bloody wound that never failed to appear. The victim would clutch his head. Bogudt would let several -- a dozen -- groups of five pass by between one blow and the next; he wore an expression of manifest boredom. The gray, meticulously combed head of old Ajzensztadt was one of those that caught his attention. The whip came down with full force; the old man staggered and sat down. Blood streamed from his eyes as if he had lost

both of them. Marysia let out a heartrending scream. The German flew into a rage at this breach of the march regimen; he was infuriated by the young woman's terrifying scream. He struck the old man again. Unable to endure this, the daughter sprang at the torturer and, before he had time to pull out his revolver, hit him as hard as she could between the eyes. Bogudt recoiled, holding the revolver with its safety released in his left hand and the whip in his right. He knocked her down with several blows from the whip, and beat her until the whistling flail had turned the woman - who lay there uncomplaining in a heap of tattered rags, her legs bare below her hitched-up skirt and her body exposed by the blows -- into a fountain of jetting blood. Bogudt was panting for air, and his face glistened. He finished her off with a shot from the revolver in his left hand. She had refused to return to the ghetto without her father and the professor.

Another who refused to go back was Dr. Janusz Korczak. Julian Traube had stationed himself by the barbed wire, near the gap through which people entered the *Umschlag*. He often took up this station, which afforded him the opportunity of checking to see whether any of his relatives or close friends had wound up at the *Umschlag*. /188/ Julian had just finished counting a party from a liquidated "shop" when Korczak arrived at the head of a group of several hundred children. He was bare-headed. His genial face was calm and serene, radiant as if with an inner light.

"I bid the engineer good day," he greeted Traube.

"There's no need to count: two hundred forty-three girls, three hundred fifty-one boys, and myself."

At first Traube was struck dumb, <then he recovered himself> and sought out Szmerling with his eyes. They understood each other without exchanging a word. At this moment there were about 8,000 people at the *Umschlag*. Julian found someone to stand in for him and forced his way through the dense, sweltering mass of humanity. Korczak and the children had already found themselves a place beneath the wall. The children sat quietly on the ground in groups of four, as if <?>. Korczak was saying something to them; hundreds of shaven little heads gazed adoringly at their father. Dr. Janusz Korczak was their real father -- a father who had devoted his entire working life, every thought of his great mind, and every emotion of his great and kind heart, to orphans. For many years he had been the administrator and patron of all the orphanages in Warsaw. He was the author of many popular children's books. He had had no private life and had never married, not wanting to bestow on anyone else a portion of what the children needed. He was their judge and their teacher; he looked out for them and followed their progress after they left his vigilant care and went out into the world. He himself went about in patched-up shoes and a frock coat threadbare with age. All of his income went to the children. He had a phenomenal memory; he could recall the names of all the children who had passed through his

various boarding-schools over a period of more than a dozen years. He had no cares other than those that were connected with the children. All orphans were his beloved children, and he took the place of a father to them. There was not a foster-child in Warsaw for whom the magnificent figure of Korczak would not be a shining presence throughout his life. /189/ Now he stood over his children; he was explaining something to them.

"Remember, my little ones," he was saying, "not all the people in the world are evil," when Julian gently touched his arm.

"Doctor, please come with me."

Korczak looked at him in astonishment.

"Where to?"

"Come with me. You will be set free."

"What about the children?"

"Try to understand. It's not possible to save them all. Please follow me, and you will be free in a matter of hours."

Korczak laughed indulgently. In September 1939, when most of the men of Warsaw were fleeing before the encroaching Germans, he alone had stayed with his beloved children.

"No. I thank you for your good intentions, but how could I abandon the children? Abandon the children *here*" -- he made a sweeping gesture with his arm by way of emphasis -- "and go out alone. To where? To the ghetto? No, there aren't any more of my children there. They've taken them all

away from me. I don't have any more children; these are all they've left me, and they and I will go together."

"But try to understand -- they'll separate you."

"No buts. I know they will separate me from the children... I thank you, Mr. Engineer, for your good intentions. Save someone else in my place. Do you remember little Esterka, the girl you sponsored? They took her away, too -- she went without me. They won't separate me from the children; only death can separate me from them. My place, and my heart, are with them. Perhaps they are taking us to our deaths. If so, it can't be helped: I must accompany them."

The children went along to the boxcars quietly and with perfect discipline, their eyes fixed on the erect back of the man who showed them the way. Every now and then he turned around, as if to make sure that no harm was coming to any of them. A puff of wind lifted the tails of his old-fashioned frock coat. To the boxcars went the illustrious Joseks, Moseks and Sruls.

/190/ Three hundred new hangman's apprentices arrived in the ghetto: three hundred *szaulisi* in their black uniforms. Each group of auxiliaries left its own distinct record in the annals of the ghetto; each had its own peculiar reputation -- the SP, the *junacy*, the Ukrainians. Worst of all were the *szaulisi*. Worst, that is, except for the Germans, who had been leading the way in barbarism since time immemorial and

who kept pace with the twentieth century by applying the latest methods made available by modern psychology, medicine and chemistry -- as they advanced in culture and civilization, so too did their sadistic tendencies grow.

With the appearance of the *szaulisi*, Hell was complete. Their black uniforms, the savagery with which they clubbed their victims with rifle-butts, their incomprehensible speech and their commands instilled fear and horror wherever they appeared. Yet their beatings and their yelling caused less injury than their thievishly deceitful ways. They were uncommonly rapacious, coveting money, gold, watches and jewelry. Only a few of them knew a smattering of Russian; the rest communicated with the Jews by means of sign-language. They would trick the latter out of money and jewels, and then put their victims to death. They followed a simple and infallible system, which the men of the SP tried in vain to thwart. They would go into an apartment building and when they found some people -- who in most cases would be ready to go clutching little bundles -- the *szaulisi* themselves would use hand gestures to suggest the idea of a bribe. Some took less, some more, depending on the individual and the circumstances, and on the victim's appearance. After collecting the bribe, they would depart. The next moment, they would send in their colleagues, who feigning ignorance and incomprehension would drive the residents out to join the party of deportees <in the street>. While escorting the party to the *Umschlag*, this second crew

would likewise offer to take a bribe; this time around they set their sights on items of greater value. By way of sign-language they would get across the idea that, once they had received a watch, a certain sum of money, or something else of value, their victim would be allowed to escape. /191/ The Jews would hand over the goods, and the *szaulisi* would let them get a few paces away before shooting them down. In every party they killed or seriously wounded between ten and twenty persons.

Their service at the *Umschlag*, which they performed in alternating shifts with the Ukrainians, was a major source of trouble for the regular SP crew, which made futile efforts to foil their machinations. Every night there would be a few innocents who either had no faith in the warnings of the Jewish police or did not care what became of them anymore; they preferred -- despite the fact that the chances of success were remote -- to seize the doubtful opportunity of getting out of the *Umschlag*, of breathing other air, and of escaping from the muck mingled with human excrement beneath their feet. At the *Umschlag*, the *szaulisi* could perpetrate their swindles only at night, alongside the wall that divided the *Umschlagstelle* from the *Transferstelle*. Here they did not have to resort to deception: a few hours spent at the *Umschlag*, with the filth, the stench, the crowding and the fear of what the morrow would bring, produced such an intolerable atmosphere that people -- despite their misgivings and the reputation that the *szaulisi* had acquired

in a few short days -- were willing to try anything. Fathers with families, husbands who had to look on as their wives fainted, women with crying children -- unable to bear their own torment or the torment of those in their care -- themselves made overtures to the *szaulisi*. Biding their time until a *szaulis* would be left alone at his post, unguarded by a Jewish policeman if only for a second, they would propose a bribe. Jews tried to outbid each other, offering valuables and large sums of money. The *szaulis* would take the jewelry and the money and help his victims to get over the high wall to the grounds of the *Transferstelle*. What they did not know was that on the other side of the wall there were also *szaulisi* on guard duty, who waited in ambush for each figure to appear... They would wait until their victims had made it over to their side, instead of firing -- as they were supposed to do -- the moment anyone showed his head at the top of the wall. They would let the victim get down, /192/ and then lead him a few hundred meters into the depths of the sprawling grounds. After robbing him of all his possessions, they would point in some direction, order him to run, and open fire. No one was surprised to hear these shots: all night long shooting could be heard all over the ghetto. The numerous night patrols fired shots; warning shots came from the gendarmes at the checkpoints, and from the bolstered guard stationed at frequent intervals along the wall ringing the ghetto.

Each day the commander of the *szaulisi* reported to the Germans that ten to twenty Jews had been killed while trying to escape. The *szaulisi* profited in two ways. Besides the material gain, the results of their work indicated zeal and discipline, which stood them in good stead with the Germans. During the entire time the *Aktion* was in progress, no one ever met with the slightest human response on the part of the *szaulisi*. They were stolid, avaricious and guileful bandits. In appearance, the Ukrainians provoked the same degree of aversion, but in contrast to the well-proportioned *szaulisi* in their clean tunics, they wore stained and crumpled uniforms; thickset, they had squat truncated torsos and oval Mongolian faces. With their ceaseless yelling they instilled fear, but they were neither so terrifying nor so ruthless as the *szaulisi*. The Ukrainians also were fond of jewelry, gold and money, but in no case did they obtain them by trickery, nor did they ever take a bribe if they felt they would be unable to render any service. There was not a single case in which they allowed themselves to be tempted -- by even the most enticing object -- if they had no way of letting someone escape. If they took a bribe, they saw to it that the donor got what he asked for in return. They were brutal, they used their rifle-butts as clubs, they vented their energies in their own primitive way -- but they never deceived anyone and they were never over-zealous about searching for hiding-places, unless there was a German hovering in the vicinity.

/193/ The *szaulisi* displaced the Ukrainians to assume the leading role after the Germans.

The *junacy*, on the other hand, were a riddle. An observer watching them from the beginning of the *Aktion* received the impression that the good Lord -- who allowed the devils to murder the Jews -- made sure he would have fifty *junacy* with him <in heaven>. There was no other solution to the mystery presented by the behavior of the *junacy*. During the entire period of the *Aktion*, there was not a single instance of a *junak* who struck someone unless he had to, and even then he did it more for the sake of appearances, without causing any injury. When they went into apartments, the *junacy* hustled the people out but never looked under the beds or <inside> the wardrobes. When they searched attics and cellars they never hauled out anyone who made at least a minimal attempt to conceal himself. When they escorted a group to the *Umschlag* -- provided there were no Germans around -- the party would melt away step by step. They let people go free in exchange for money, and gratis. Freeing people with the help of the SP, and many times on their own, they risked having an entire party scatter on them. There was a widely held conviction that if the *junacy* had been assigned to duty at the *Umschlag*, it would have been possible to set free several hundred persons a night. It made things considerably easier that they all spoke Polish. The *junacy* and the *szaulisi* were two separate worlds in service to the same devil.

The public's attitude towards the SP ranged from condemnation of its participation in the *Aktion*, through feelings of hatred and gratitude towards individual officers, to compassion: compassion springing from the sure knowledge that an inevitable fate was in store for the men in the ranks once their macabre task -- from which it was already too late for them to extricate themselves -- was finished.

The *Aktion* was raging in every section of the ghetto. It suffocated, strangled, drove mad: in every family, already shattered, it extracted new victims with its horrible talons, leaving bloody furrows in the ranks of the survivors, *<niepewnych /194/ godziny ni własnego jutra>*. The unceasing Gehenna was expressed in the words: "And there will come a time when the living shall envy the dead."

The stench of corpses filled the ghetto, and everywhere within its limits down feathers floated in the air.

Homeless, ownerless dogs roamed the streets. In dark recesses orphaned tots sobbed and wailed out an incessant complaint: they could not fathom how Mommy could be gone, or how the father they loved so dearly could leave and not come back. Tiny, hungry, they lacked the strength to cry, sensing instinctively -- like small creatures set upon by hounds -- that they had to keep to the shadows of dank cellars, that the street menaced them with something terrible and unknown whose name was "German."

Jews were fleeing from the ghetto to the Aryan side. The ones who fled were those who had money and friends. Each

day, as the *Aktion* intensified, a keen observer might spot dozens of persons passing out through the ghetto gates with the daily work-parties. This keen observer would immediately recognize women and men who were trying to dress like workers and who presented themselves to be searched with a deathly pallor on their faces. They could not be sure that a gendarme or an SS-man would not take away all their worldly possessions, meant to sustain them on "the other side." The few working telephones left in the ghetto were besieged by people seeking to make contact with Aryans. They unearthed recollections of pre-war friendships, of relationships both personal and commercial in nature. Imploring voices coursed along the telephone lines in one directions; back came the answers to their pleas: curt refusal, consent to let someone stay for a few days, or a reply marked by genuine friendship and willingness to help, which lit up the caller's face with joy and hope for a better future. /195/ Each day the SP men who escorted site-workers took with them a certain number of people trying to escape from Hell to the Aryan side.

How it came about that the all-knowing Germans allowed this to go on was a mystery. For each person smuggled out, the SP group officers received a substantial sum of money. They had passes, issued to them personally, that specified only the number of persons employed at a given site; the names of the workers were omitted. Yet from the start of the *Aktion* -- despite the repeated selections conducted among the site-workers -- not only did the number of those escorted

each day not decrease, but, on the contrary, the places of those rounded up would be taken the next day by others seeking some kind of employment, either in the "shops" or elsewhere, that offered some guarantee of security, however illusory it might be.

On a pass good for sixty workers, eighty or ninety people would go out, and of these a dozen or more would not return in the evening but would remain on the Aryan side. The SS-men at the checkpoints regarded the matter with unaccountable indifference. They checked the passes, but never compared the figures enumerated therein with the actual number of people going through the gates. Ignoring the workers' ages, they let through old men and small children -- sometimes infants: often, they asked how a baby could be a worker, but they settled for any kind of answer (typically, that a worker was bringing his child along with him, as everyone was working and there was no one to leave it with). The children passed through, and were picked up at the work-sites by good Christians motivated by material gain or friendship. Every day a few hundred people crossed over to the Aryan side, although, to be sure, several dozen of them would return after being disabused one way or another of the illusion that they would find help and preservation on the other side.

/196/ Yet, in spite of the numerous instances of extortion; in spite of the hundreds of hyenas that battered, over there where their dreams were centered, on the tragedy

of the Jews; in spite of the hundreds of youths and shady types that by now made a career of blackmailing Jews; in spite of the informers and **<bezglós grabieży ?>**; in spite of being stripped of all their possessions in the recess of some archway, where the victim would turn over without protest money, gold and jewelry, sometimes not even making it to the rendezvous with the waiting friend who had agreed to let him come; in spite of the incidents in which the hyenas first divested their victim of his money and frequently his clothing, and then handed him over to the authorities -- <in spite of all this,> fewer Jews returned to the ghetto than went out. It can be stated that hundreds of Jews escaped each day, right before the eyes of the Germans, right through their fingers, which did no more than frisk them. No one could unravel this mystery. An SS-man would merely have had to check the number of site-workers going out of the ghetto in the morning against the figure stated in the pass, and it would have been impossible for the dozens of persons that each SP escort brought with him illegally to escape. Such verification, given that all the walls were guarded by *szaulisi* and Ukrainians, would have rendered it impossible for anyone to gain entry from the ghetto-side without authorization. The fact that the Germans viewed these thinly disguised escapes with indifference -- neither reacting to them nor trying to prevent them -- carried a hint of some inexplicable threat. It seemed as though the Germans knew that, along with the site-workers, Jews who had no intention

of returning were crossing over to the Aryan side. They knew but looked the other way, because they were confident of their ability to get these Jews back into their hands again. The most straightforward explanation -- that Jews dressed up like workers could fool the Germans; that crossing by way of the checkpoints was an overlooked flaw in the operation of the crushing machine -- was inconceivable. /197/ It was inconceivable that what every person in the ghetto knew could be a secret to the Germans. Notwithstanding the disappointments and arduous experiences of those who came back, everyone dreamt of fleeing to the Aryan side. The telephones were overwhelmed with conversations tragic in their simplicity and in their exact similarity to one another -- only the names changed. Seeking to make contact, Jews ransacked their memories for the names of classmates and comrades-in-arms. Women and men studied their <own> faces looking for Aryan features. The men grew mustaches; the women bleached their hair. Even those who had not the slightest hope of escaping, those who did not know a single address or name on the other side, resorted to these two stratagems. This was the only universally shared reflex of self-preservation. Well-to-do families entrusted their small children to the care of acquaintances on the Aryan side. The insatiable *Umschlag* ceaselessly devoured its daily quota of victims. The Jews went to their deaths like sheep; the Jews were cowards: such was the opinion on the Aryan side. Why did the Jews not defend themselves? If the ghetto stood up

for itself we would help them, the Poles said. The Jews did not defend themselves; every day more parties went to the *Umschlag*, quietly and without screams or lamentations. No one knew what they were thinking -- if their exhausted brains were capable of thinking anything at all. Their backs were bent beneath the hundredweight of their destiny. The two years of confinement within the walls; the struggle for survival; the preoccupation with getting their daily bread; the entire structure of the ghetto, which drove people down into the depths of poverty; the dismemberment and tearing apart of families from the very first days of the *Aktion*; the lack of a spiritual guide; the breakdown of social cohesion and the impossibility of obtaining a ruling by the Jewish Council, so that each resident of the ghetto was condemned to find his own way -- all of this led every one of them down the same road. People /198/ went to their deaths either unwittingly or no longer caring one way or the other. There were no suicides. Mothers whose children had been taken away yesterday, fathers and husbands whose children and wives had been taken away yesterday, children who had no parents went to the *Umschlag* in a stupor, with boundless sorrow in their eyes. They moved their tired bodies listlessly, as if they were a hundred years old. By now it was beyond their ability to think or to defend themselves even by crying out in protest. They were incapable of rousing themselves from their stupefied condition... They did not defend themselves, nor did anyone come to their aid.

It was on the evening of September 1st that the droning of airplanes filled the skies, and explosions rocked the earth.

It was help: help for us Jews, for our sufferings, for the deaths of our loved ones. The bombs rained down. Apartment windows were full of faces steeped in prayer, faces weeping and laughing through their tears. The Jews were praying. They strained to hear the report of the blasts; with each series of explosions the hope grew that the hour of their deliverance was at hand. They did not descend into their shelters: the prospect of dying beneath the rubble of their homes held no fear for anyone. The sky was lit up by flares and slashed by the bright beams of searchlights; it belched fire. The bombs whistled before crashing into the earth. "O God, bring it to pass that a bomb strike our house, that our sufferings might end. O God, work thou a miracle and smite the barbarians." The bombardment steadily intensified. At the *Umschlag* there were 5,000 people crammed tightly together: children and old people, the clean with the dirty, men and women -- a compact mass of victims shackled by the same bond of misery. The gendarmes had fled from the gates and taken cover in nearby apartment buildings; /199/ the Ukrainians had slunk away from their posts. Only the Jewish police remained. Was it heroic scorn for death, or torpor? The crowd pressed up against the guard posts, those in the rear desperately pushing the front rows forward.

"Officers, let us go. The Germans and Ukrainians are all gone." In silence, the SP officers held the shuddering ironwork gates and the numerous wooden doors shut. The crowd tried to advance by means of force and entreaty. "Let us out!" Into the enraged crowd dropped the calm voice of one police officer. "Break down the gates, force open the doors" -- he stood leaning casually against the grillework of the tottering iron gate -- "tie us up, trample us to death, beat us. We are unarmed; there are only fifty of us. The guards have run away from the gates, the gendarmes are gone. Well, what are you waiting for?" he egged them on. The gates stopped wavering; the front rows of people drew back. Had the officer lost his wits? The bombardment lasted for forty-five minutes. The Germans and the Ukrainians crept back to their posts. No one had escaped from the *Umschlag*. The flares and the searchlights faded out and the sky turned dark, lit up in a few spots by the variable glow of conflagrations. In the ghetto only one building was ablaze, on Nowolipki Street. The SP put out the fire. Szeryński directed the rescue operation. By the light of the burning building, an unknown assailant wearing a policeman's cap and armband fired a shot at the chief of the SP. The bullet grazed his cheek without injury to the bone. The perpetrator eluded discovery. All night long the residents of the ghetto remained transfixed by the bombardment. They awaited the dawn with impatience. Would there be an "action" or not?

The damage must have been severe; the pilots dropped no bombs on the ghetto.

The night, full of hopes, illusory dreams and prognostications, had passed. Dawn cast a rosy hue over the smoking sky. In the police barracks they expected the morning assembly to be called off, but it was not. Roll-call proceeded normally. Lejkin accepted the Germans' praise for the guard-unit at the *Umschlag*. The Germans directed the "action" at a murderous tempo; they themselves worked like frenzied dogs, /200/ urging on the *szaulisi*, the Ukrainians, the *junacy* and the SP.

Behind each party of deportees marched a special team of Ukrainians carrying crowbars, axes and sledgehammers for smashing the locks on shops and breaking down stout doors. On this day they drove 8,000 Jews to the *Umschlag* and made no selections. There were two trains, the first at twelve o'clock and the second around six. They rounded up the caretakers of apartment buildings along with their families; all the regulations were ignored. In the previously untouched building at No. 103 Żelazna alone, they conducted a selection, leaving behind only a few families of *Judenrat* members and some individuals protected by Lolek Skosowski and <Arel Weintraub?>; the rest went to the *Umschlag*. They hauled away their own maids.

Working in the capacity of chambermaid for Major Höfle was a young and pretty engineer by the name of Joanna Bruckner. Höfle gave her permission to live at No. 103

together with her little daughter. He assured her on more than one occasion that she had nothing to fear. She and her daughter were taken away along with the others, no doubt during the major's absence. (With a couple of other Germans, he had gone for two days to Kraków, where they were also deporting the Jews.) He returned about half an hour after the raid on Żelazna. Calling for his maid, he learned that Joanna had been taken away in her slippers. He jumped in his car and sped to the *Umschlag*. Joanna was already inside a sealed boxcar.

It was too late for Höfle to get her out of there.

The air attack had had nothing to do with the tragedy of the Jews. Not intended to help them, it was but a minor element in the strategy of the Soviet air force. The outside world had been informed of everything; it knew about the hecatombs of victims being transported from all parts of Europe to Treblinka. Somewhere over there in America, in reply to /201/ Hitler's threats, *Kaddish* had long since been said for the Jews of Europe.

Julian was not back; Julian was still not there. Irena paced the length of the room countless times, repeating over and over words of desperation: "It's already nine o'clock. The gates were shut a long time ago. All the officers have long since been home. Julian's the only one who hasn't come back." Stoliński, it was true, had stopped by two hours earlier to reassure Irena and let her know that Julian would be late. "Your husband's had a hard day. It seems he's lost

a few people who meant a lot to him -- I don't know exactly who it was. Put your mind at ease. He'll be a little late -- he has a few things to take care of. I wanted to go along and drag him home, but I imagine you know how hard he is to deal with. He can take care of himself. He looked at me with those eyes of his and told me to reassure you." Since then several hours had passed; Irena was running from pillar to post. Outside the window it was already pitch-dark. The sound of gunfire reached the room. The echo of each shot shook her to her depths; every shot invaded her brain and made her tremble violently. She tried to soothe herself, wiping away the tears that welled up incessantly in her eyes. Julian cannot see her crying; when Julian comes back he must find her calm.

Somehow she had imagined domestic life with him differently. When she was thirteen she started keeping a diary. It was a beautiful little volume, bound in morocco, a joint birthday gift from her three sisters. She wrote in it for two years; it was half-filled with the reveries of a young girl. Inscribed in a tiny hand were two years' worth of the confidences of an innocent heart. When she went to live with her husband, she took the diary, along with her dresses and cherished knickknacks, from her girlhood room. It lay in the bottom of a wooden box for ten years. The large letters of a practiced hand now contrasted sharply with the miniature script: "My mama is no longer living. They killed her like a dog in the street. I thank thee, o God,

that thou hast spared her /202/ the long road to death." Then followed other events fraught with despair. "In the next house over, my sister is dying -- my beloved little Polusia. She's the wife of a policeman. Jerzyk married her. Dear papa, if you return from your travels around the world, you will find neither mama nor Polcia among the living. I visited her today -- she doesn't know that mama is no longer with us. Polcia is twenty years old and dying of consumption. 'You'll see, Irena,' she said. 'The war'll end, papa will come and send me to a sanatorium in Switzerland. I'll get well again and I'll be able to be a true wife to Jerzyk.'

"Oh, Julian, if you don't come back, if something has happened to you, I won't survive your death. I won't be able to go on without you even for an hour. O kind God, grant that I might endure this agony, help me to be strong. Bring it to pass that I might see Julian again, if only one more time..."

Irena was devout and prayed often -- prayed like a little girl. From the adjoining room came the sound of a woman quietly sobbing, and a man's gently coaxing voice. The Bomblats lived with their two children in the next room. Irena had no strength left; she walked about reeling, bumping into the furniture. Obliviously, she knocked over a chair and collided with the table, causing the dishes she had laid for Julian's supper to rattle. Irena could not stand Mrs. Bomblat's weeping; the Bomblats found her frantic chasing

about the room intolerable. They simultaneously came to the conclusion that it would be better to have it out. Bomblat opened the door at the very moment that Irena decided to pay them a visit.

"What are you crying about?" She started in on the woman, who was engulfed in tears as she gazed at her slumbering children. Mrs. Bomblat wept every evening while putting her children to bed, and wept when she woke them up again -- wept for her little angels.

"And what do you have to cry for? Your husband's late getting home -- so what? Nothing's going to happen to your husband. I never cry when mine is late. I don't worry about him, /203/ or about myself either. It's not the adults I feel sorry for -- I didn't cry when my husband broke the news that he had loaded my parents onto a train -- but the children. You see, I know that one day they'll take my children away from me."

It was not the first time that Irena had heard the young woman's lament. Mrs. Bomblat wept over everything that was done in connection with her children. Left to each other's company from morning to night, the two women quarreled, each chiding the other for weeping needlessly. It was already midnight when Julian's footsteps could be heard on the staircase. His eyes were sunken and surrounded by livid shadows; at the corners of his clenched lips there were two deep furrows. A gray pallor broke through the surface of his tanned skin. When he entered the room he squinted: the

glare from the light bulb dazzled him. Meeting Irena's glance, he read in a single instant the desolation of the last few hours on her face. Irena smiled gamely, and he made an effort to unlock his clenched jaws. Without saying a word he flung himself into a chair. His back was bowed, as if compressed by the weight of his head, which he clutched with both hands. He pressed his large hands against his temples. Irena sat for a long moment unable to contain the joy she felt on seeing her beloved, although she sensed that Julian was going through something terrible. She did not dare ask for fear of hearing something that would pull her down into an abyss of despair; she did not have the nerve to be the first to break the heavy silence. Yet Julian went on sitting there motionless -- were it not for the fact that he kept the palms of his hands clenched tightly around his forehead, one might have thought that he was asleep. She knelt down quietly next to him and tried to pull one hand away.

"Julian! Tell me what happened. You'll feel better if you tell me the story."

"They're gone," came the whispered reply.

Three persons nodded their heads mechanically. All of them understood what that little word meant; they understood that certain people close to Julian had gone away. "Gone" meant something that was impossible to understand. "Gone" meant: the *Umschlag*, then the boxcars carried off into the distance, and then... something /204/ unknown -- a labor-camp, a concentration camp, or a horrible chemical death.

This little word yanked at the hearts of the three listeners and set them to swirling in nightmarish fashion; it wrenched at all the cells of their brains. Julian fell silent again. Trembling, Irena waited for him to go on. "O God, just let it not be his parents, not his parents." She peered into his shuttered eyes mortally afraid that she would hear some name --

"They took all of them. They went with their heads bare, with *Ausweise* in their hands."

He lit a cigarette and glanced around, as if trying to recall where he was. Seeing the expectant looks on their faces, he began to tell the story. His voice seemed to emerge from his clamped jaws with difficulty.

"I had a hell of a day today. I don't know whether I'll be able to relate everything I've been through today, or whether I've remembered all the people I'll never see again. It started with my Aunt Janka. For the past couple of days she'd had her mind made up to go and join her husband at the camp in Kawęczyn, since women work there too. She also decided that she would go to Kawęczyn passing as an Aryan, and somehow find her way to her husband. I saw her off today at the checkpoint, where Janowski took her along as one of the female workers. She had a hundred zlotys and a gold watch with her. She made it safely through the search; the money and the watch were not discovered. From the gate I went to the *Umschlag*, where I took up my post counting the people. At twelve o'clock they brought in some forty persons

captured on the Aryan side. Among them was Janka
<Pomerancenbaum?>.

"How could that have happened? She had the right
features, after all."

Julian smiled bitterly.

"It was her own fault. Instead of waiting until she got
to the work-site, away from the ghetto, she bolted out of the
marching column of workers right by the checkpoint. Some
"*szmuchelnicy*" spotted her, and she had to give them the
money and the watch. To make matters worse, in parting she
fired off a few choice words. /205/ One of the extortionists
took offense and handed her over to a Polish policeman, who
in turn escorted her to the *Befehlstelle*. From there she
went to the *Umschlag*. I couldn't do a thing for her, since
as you know parties sent from the *Befehlstelle* are delivered
to the *Umschlag* with a list of names.

"At two o'clock I counted off my other aunt, my uncle
and four cousins. Half an hour later they brought in the
workers from Toplitz's wood-products 'shop', which had been
liquidated. The artist Reizynower was registered there with
his wife and son, and I couldn't do anything for them,
because they wanted to go free together or not at all. At
four, the loading commenced. At that same moment I found out
that an 'action' had started in the vicinity of Karmelicka.
I hurried over to the Garden on my bicycle. By the time I
arrived they had already cordoned off Karmelicka, Nowolipie,
Mylna and Nowolipki. I went and stood by the wicket-gate

sure that everyone inside was already hidden as usual. I barely had time to catch my breath before a dozen or so Ukrainians invaded the Garden. I went in behind them. They crossed the grounds of the Garden without noticing anything suspicious. From the Garden they went into the courtyard and headed towards Ostrzega and Weintraub's workshop. They pounded on the door. To my dismay, it opened from the inside. The Ukrainians drove them all out to join the party they were collecting at the corner of Karmelicka and Nowolipie. The painters didn't even look scared. Each one of them held an *Ausweis* in his hand. As I found out later, this morning the workers in Karl Heinz Müller's 'shop' had gotten their documents stamped by the S.D. At 8 AM they got the stamp, and at 4 PM came the order to close down Müller's 'shops'. Since there were a couple of thousand people in the party, it had an escort made up of Ukrainians and a few Germans. I pedaled after them hoping to be able to rescue at least one or two of them along the way. But it so happened that the Germans -- either because they didn't want to be harassed by /206/ by the commissioners from the shops, or just by happenstance -- drove the party not to the *Umschlag* but through the second gate, by way of the *Transferstelle*, straight to the boxcars. I stood beside them in the yard before the boxcars, where they waited their turn to board. Right up to the very last moment they believed that there was going to be a selection, and that they would be set free. It wasn't until they were ordered to line up in a column five

abreast facing the tracks that they realized they had been tricked. Weintraub, who had come up with the idea for the 'shop', kept saying over and over, 'Forgive me, my friends. It's all my fault.' They boarded with their heads bare and wearing their bespattered artist's aprons. They looked all around, with their eyes half-shut, as if they wanted to soak up this last day in the Warsaw they were leaving behind. I could be wrong, but they seemed so different from the crowd surrounding them. 'Save our wives. They stayed behind in the Garden.' Those were their last words. Each one of them gave me a smile by way of farewell. Each of them <?> his gaze on my face, tried to read his fate in my expression. I tried to look upbeat as they got onto the train. Kramsztyk, Turków and the rest weren't there. I found them all at the Garden: Genia, the Werkmeisters, the Karolkas, Turków, Mrs. Ostrzęga, Mrs. Rozenszacht, Mrs. Weintraub and her children, and the wives of Rabinowicz and Eljasz. All of the women, except for Genia, had no *Ausweis*. Genia had one stamped by the S.D. but preferred (as we had agreed) not to rely on it. I'm at a loss how to convey the despair the women felt after losing their husbands. I found out from Turków that Kramsztyk had gone back to his old apartment to fetch something. He had gone out first thing in the morning. With the 'action' still in progress, I was worried that he would be scared to come back on his own, so I decided to go and get him. Along the way I dropped in to see my baker about some bread. Since I hadn't been to visit Mrs. Kolski and Mrs.

Czajfus, I decided to bring them a couple of loaves. I rode up to the gate as /207/ usual, and went inside to leave my bicycle with the caretaker. The moment he saw me there was a look of terror on his face. 'Your aunts aren't here anymore.'

"What do you mean, not here anymore?' It seemed incredible that anything could have happened to them. After all, as you know, Többens is the best place to be. Besides, yesterday I was on duty at the *Umschlag* until eight in the evening, and there's no way that they couldn't have been home. But, as it turns out, our reality is full of things that can't possibly happen. From the caretaker, I learned that at 6 PM yesterday, just before Többens' workers returned to their barracks, the Ukrainians were escorting a small party to the *Umschlag*. The party had crossed Nowolipie and already turned down Smocza when a hullabaloo broke out in some unknown courtyard. The party scattered. The Ukrainians began shooting, but to no avail -- the people paid no attention to the bullets and just kept on running. Out of several hundred people, some forty persons were left in the party. Without giving it a lot of thought, the Ukrainians mounted an 'action' -- on their own authority, as it later turned out. Some of them stood watch over the party while the rest went into a couple of apartment houses, ignoring the signs announcing that these were the barracks for Többens' workers. A couple of shots in the air did the trick. Figuring that it was a [routine] 'action', the Többens

workers began heading downstairs. Only those who had *Ausweise* came down. This was just what the Ukrainians were waiting for. Every building had a few dozen obedient or naïve souls, among them my two aunts and my cousin."

Julian lit another cigarette. The others shook their heads vaguely as they listened.

"You might think that this is all I've been through today. You know it's not, don't you?" he said, turning to Irena. "I'll lay odds," he said in a forced attempt at humor, "that my wife has already calculated that up to the point where I stopped it was only six o'clock, but that I just returned a little while ago. After my aunts' 'funeral', I was so dejected that I decided /208/ to return home. I was already on my way back when I ran into a fellow officer rushing in the opposite direction down Nowolipie. He shouted something to me on the fly. I turned around and chased after him. I found out that he was hurrying to the Leszno-Żelazna gate, where rumor had it they were conducting an 'action' among the returning site-workers. I was seized with fear for my father, my sister and my brother-in-law. When I got to Leszno, the 'action' was in full swing. Groups of site-workers were kneeling the whole length of the street from the gate to Karmelicka. Brandt was making selections, matching the group leaders' passes to the entries in his little notebook. More and more work-contingents kept pouring into the ghetto from the checkpoint. Some were going down the right side of the street, the others down the left side. I

couldn't tell which side was headed for the *Umschlag*, and which was going to be set free. I spotted father on the right side and, at the same moment, saw Jakubowski gesturing to me frantically from the party on the left. Now I knew just which side was bound for the *Umschlag*. Father was employed by the *Ostbahn*, while Jakubowski worked for a private German firm. I stayed close to Jakubowski. Although it was irrational on my part, I couldn't shake off my fears for my father. I still didn't know what I was going to do -- how I could save Herman. Basia wasn't there; by some bizarre coincidence she had stayed over for the night at the worksite, at the caretaker's place. The 'action' was a major affair. Several more Germans drove up. They kept firing incessantly, more to intimidate people than anything else. They were clearly a bit on edge, because the party headed for the *Umschlag* consisted entirely of young men. In just under half an hour the party assembled on the left side numbered two thousand men. It was divided into two groups, one escorted by the Ukrainians, the other by the *junacy*. Herman was in this second group. By luck I found someone I knew in the *junak* escort. A few hundred meters round the corner, on Karmelicka, Herman was able to get away safely. Hold on, that's not all yet. After getting Herman free I had to see father safely to /209/ the Garden. He put up a brave front, assuring me that the 'action' hadn't frightened him. I kept it a secret from him that he had lost one sister today. Kramsztyk still wasn't there, so instead of coming back home

I went to get him. The main door [of his building] had some panels smashed in -- like every other door in the ghetto, for that matter. I didn't find anyone there, either in Kramsztyk's room or in the entire apartment. The building looked deserted. I called out for a long time before I saw a living soul. Some man poked his head out a cellar window and told me to wait. It was the caretaker, who knew me by sight.

"'You want to see Mr. Kramsztyk? Follow me.'

"He took me to the cellar by a roundabout path, after which I went down a long and narrow tunnel, and then had to crawl on my belly through a hole in a wall. The cellar was roomy and had several dozen people gathered in it. Kramsztyk was lying on a pallet in the corner. His face was pale, almost white. When he caught sight of me, he tried to summon up one of his charming smiles.

"'I told them to ask you down here to see me. The caretaker heard somebody shouting my name. They've done me in today: I'm still alive, but not for long.'

"Kramsztyk had gone to his apartment to get some pencils. At ten o'clock a blockade caught him by surprise, and he had nowhere to hide. A stray bullet hit him in the lungs; he fell down unconscious and bleeding profusely. The Germans left him lying spread-eagled in the courtyard. It was only when the shouting and gunfire died down, a couple of hours later, that some people who had been hiding in their shelters came out into the courtyard and carried him down to

the cellar. A doctor who was present gave him a couple of injections, but held out no hope of recovery.

"I assured these people that I could let you in, that you wouldn't betray people who were in hiding.' He was speaking more to the others there, trying to reassure them one more time that they could trust me. He was running a high fever. He would be lucid, then start to wander again. I didn't have the heart to leave. His burning stare held me spellbound; my arm was locked in his grip.

/210/ "'Tell my friends to paint. Say good-bye to them for me.'

"I had to swear a solemn oath to him that I would prevail on his colleagues to paint scenes depicting the history of the ghetto after the war.

"They should forget about painting nudes, portraits and still-lives. The world must learn of these crimes. Tell them that Kramsztyk begs them to paint scenes from the ghetto. Let them sacrifice everything so that the world may find out about the bestiality of the Germans.'

"He was already in his death throes. Blood gushed from his mouth. He was suffering horribly. From his pocket he drew out a couple of pencils, sanguine-colored ones, and handed them reverently to me. As he did this he kept saying to me, 'Give them to the others as a memento from Kramsztyk. They're good pencils, the genuine article, from France.' He died an hour ago. He handed me this gold watch to remember him by; it was a prize from some French exhibition. There's

an inscription on the case: *Liberté Egalité Fraternité*. <He asked:> 'Do you remember when we met in my studio on the Avenue Denfert-Rochereau?'"

"I see that out of today's experiences the one that's shaken you up the most is the death of Roman Kramsztyk," said Mrs. Bomblat, "and yet in comparison with these thousands of people going to their death, his death was enviable. He died on a pallet, but you were with him to the last. He passed away in the arms of a well-wisher. Or do you feel sorry for Kramsztyk the most because you witnessed his death firsthand?"

"I'm envious of all the dead. No, I don't feel sorry for Kramsztyk. I don't feel sorry for anyone or anything. I only wish I could shout loud enough for the whole world to hear me: 'Down with civilization!' All I'd like is to have enough strength to endure to the end, so that I don't lose my faculties before my turn comes, and so that I can gaze on this macabre spectacle with sober eyes until the last moment..."

/211/ "You who only catch glimpses of the tragedy of the ghetto, you're in no position to understand what they go through -- those who are present at all of these scenes, those who are free to move around in this vestibule of hell."

"You can say that again," assented Mrs. Bomblat. "What time is roll-call tomorrow?"

"They've announced it for 6:45 in front of HQ."

Julian was totally exhausted and hungry. He realized that he had not eaten a thing since noontime. Yet he was not fated to have a meal this evening. No sooner did he sit down at the table than three whistle-blasts sounded in the courtyard, followed by a voice calling out: "Attention! Attention! Attention!" The women ran to the window in order to receive, as usual, instructions or changes in the previously announced assembly-hour. They would relay the information to their husbands. But this announcement was not about roll-call, as had been the case on so many occasions following the triple repetition of the word "Attention!" This time it held in store the long-awaited verdict. The voice was unfamiliar; it was some stranger that was speaking, someone they could not make out in the dark, somebody new. Heads appeared like faint smudges in all the windows. The voice from below informed them: "By order of the authorities, officers of the Public-Order Service and their families are required to move by ten o'clock to Wołyńska Street. We will be staying on Wołyńska Street for two days. There a selection will be conducted among the officers of the SP. After two days we will return. You will need to bring along enough food for two days, as well as only the most essential items. For this night curfew has been lifted. You are authorized to begin moving immediately. Your apartments must be left open. Anyone remaining in the residential block is subject to the death penalty." From the windows came a hail of questions. They fell into a void of darkness -- the

officer who had brought the ill tidings had already moved on to the next building. Lights went on in the windows. If someone had looked inside through the windows, he would have seen the same tableau in every room: people torn from sleep, half-awake; men /212/ rubbing their temples; keening women; and blubbering children, who in their precocious little hearts sensed that something terrible was happening since even papa was crying.

The men sat for a long time attempting to make sense of the announcement they had just heard. They strove in vain to find a way out of the situation; in vain they tried to fathom the hidden meaning of the innocuously phrased remarks. In their tired brains the last sentence swirled alone: "Anyone remaining in the residential block is subject to the death penalty."

Julian slowly tore himself away from the window-sill, turned around and casually straightened his tie. Squinting slightly, he gazed into the faces of the others one by one. Mrs. Bomblat was rubbing her face distractedly with her hands; she tugged at her cheeks in silence. Mr. Bomblat, tall and affable -- his nickname was "cornstalk" on account of his height -- looked like a tree sawn halfway through: he swayed on his feet as though he might fall down at any moment. Irena nervously smoked a cigarette, but gave her husband a smile. Watching Julian's face, she was happy to see -- she could almost touch it -- the mask of composure as he put it on. She had been studying his face for the past

week; no expression, no shudder or grimace of his mobile face escaped her attention. For a week now she had been living in dread of the moment when she would see his face plunged in a vortex of anguish from which he would be unable to extricate himself. She dreaded the blow that would shatter her high-strung swain, that would turn this self-possessed man into a hapless cockleshell incapable of withstanding the fearful waves. And although he had frightened her more than once with his feigned composure and his forced humor laced with cynicism, of late she had come to prefer this. Julian gave a faint smile -- evidently things were all right. She answered him with a trustful look, a look that said: I am not afraid of anything when you are by me.

/213/ In the room there was a palpable air of madness.

"Go and wake up your children," said Julian, addressing Mrs. Bomblat. "Easy now, calm down."

The young woman kept silent, but her eyes were bulging and the veins stood up on her forehead and neck. One had the impression that she would start screaming in a moment.

"Get a move on, lady -- do you want someone to see you blubbering like this? <? **Rusz ze się stara, fe kto tak widział tak się mazgać,** -?> After all, nothing's happened - - we'll come back in two days. Well, go on -- wake the kids."

"Children, my little angels, get up, you need to get dressed. We're going to move. We'll come back in two days. We'll come back here in two days," she repeated to the half-

awake children. She helped them dress, making them laugh when she tried to pull their shirts onto their legs or their pants over their heads. The older boy finally got upset. "I'll put my clothes on myself," he insisted vociferously.

"Julian, have something to eat," begged Irena.

"I won't be eating anything. I don't feel hungry. Besides, I have time to pack a bit of food. The women will stay here for now, and the men will go and stake out a claim to a comfortable apartment. -- Bring the older boy with you. -- For now we'll take along some of the bedding and leave the boy to watch over the new apartment. We'll come back to fetch the rest of you ourselves."

Julian spoke, issuing a steady stream of instructions and allowing no opportunity for wailing or discussion. "Get a move on, you oaf," he said, giving Bomblat a nudge to rouse him from his trance. The children were the only ones to respond to Julian's facetiousness and quips; even when they did not get the joke they laughed gaily. From one of the suitcases that filled the room he pulled out a bottle of Carmel wine <karmel ?> from Palestine. Unable to locate a corkscrew, he struck the neck of the bottle against the marble top of the wash-basin. The golden liquid splattered onto the floor together with a piece of glass. He poured out the wine into some hastily gathered containers -- for himself he made use of a crystal flower-vase.

"To the selection!"

Little Daniel asked what a /214/ selection was.

"I don't know myself, but they'll tell us there where we're going to be living." Mrs. Bomblat, sobbing, struggled valiantly with her tears. Irena was observing Julian: his face was white as chalk; his hollow eyes gleamed feverishly, and his lips were frozen in a twisted smile. "We'll stay together. Or maybe you don't want to live with me?"

"We do! We do!" The children cast their votes decisively in Julian's favor.

From the next room Irena had been trying to get his attention for some time. She closed the door and leaned her back against it.

"I'd like a moment of your time, my merry wizard." Her voice was shaking. She spoke calmly, but in disjointed sentences. "Oh, Julian! Do you know where we are going? Don't you realize that this isn't any selection? Oh, Julian! Don't you see: this is the end. I know I don't have the right to impose my views, I know I can count on you, but ... oh, Julian! Let's run away -- it's now or never."

He took her gently by the wrist. His expression had turned serious. He concentrated his gaze on her eyes.

"Do you trust me?"

"This is death," she protested. "Try to understand. This is not about me. I feel worse for you than for myself."

"Irena, we don't have time for talking. We're about to go through a lot of things that we can't possibly anticipate. We won't have time for discussions. One of us has to give orders, and the other obey them. Since I have a better idea

of the situation, the lesser of two evils is for you to follow my lead blindly for a little while. Escape is out of the question -- most likely the whole ghetto will go through selection. If my theory is correct, no one in the ghetto can slip out just now. If the selection is a sham and nobody is going to get through it <alive>, then there won't be any way out -- it'll just be that much more impossible. I can tell you one thing for sure: I'm not about to go to my death like a sheep. To my dying breath I will keep trying /215/ to save my family and my friends, and ultimately, the two of us."

Julian's words reached Irena as if through a shell that enclosed her brain in an iron band.

Julian was right: the entire ghetto was to undergo selection. The SP got the word at one o'clock in the morning, and at 5 AM, all over the main and little ghettos, placards went up instructing all residents of the ghetto to move to the following streets: Miła, Lubeckiego, Ostrowska. The boundary-line was fixed at the intersection of Zamenhof and Gęsia. Anyone found beyond the demarcation line after 10 AM would be shot. The order was signed for the first time since the start of the *Aktion*, by the engineer <Marek> Lichtenbaum in his capacity as the new president of the *Judenrat*. Shortly after one in the morning, the officers of the SP and their families began relocating; the rest of the population of the little and main ghettos set out around six o'clock.

The procession was headed by the employees of the "shops," followed by their families. The remainder consisted of those who had been in hiding up to this point. A sea of heads flooded down the thoroughfare and the sidewalks in the direction of Zamenhof. The procession started just before six and swelled in volume with each passing minute; as it grew, it spread over the entire width of the streets. Had nothing at all changed since the time of Pharaoh? The only difference, in all probability, was this: whereas those others had carried bundles dangling from poles slung over their shoulders, these carried small suitcases and briefcases, and their children satchels. Moses had led the former to a new land and a new life; the latter went alone, leading their own children to death. No powerful leader strode at the head of the procession; his place was taken by his namesakes -- gray, emaciated, mortally weary Jews.

At eight o'clock, six hundred SS troops marched into the ghetto by the Leszno-Żelazna gate. One hundred fifty of them /216/ formed a double cordon down Gęsia Street, leaving a passage free at the crossing with Zamenhof. Four hundred thirty <sic!> SS soldiers split up into small units of six or twelve men apiece. They began patrolling the streets of the ghetto; besides machine-guns, they were armed with gas-masks and grenades with long wooden handles.

"Cellars won't do you any good," said their gas-masks. "There's no place for you to hide," said the grenades. "You have two hours to make up your minds," said the machine-guns.

"Anyone we find after ten o'clock will be shot." The patrols were staged in masterful fashion -- the science of twentieth-century psychology. After an hour of these free-ranging patrols, the ebbing tide of people was augmented by a new throng from among those who had still been holding back. Here, death was but an hour away, while there there was at least some chance of survival: suppose all those rumors about gas-chambers were untrue?

Masterfully staged was the appearance of Pinkiert's black hearses, which showed up as ordered with their work-crews and all their equipment. The horses drew the carts along at a snail's pace.

Punctually at ten o'clock, the SS troops closed Zamenhof Street off from Gezia. Heavy machine-guns were set up at the checkpoint. A second file of SS-men formed a dense double cordon from Wołyńska Street down the middle of Zamenhof all the way to the *Umschlag*.

At ten-fifteen, two German automobiles rounded the corner from Nowolipki onto Zamenhof. The cars advanced noiselessly, and came to a stop opposite a gate bearing the address, No. 9. Above the gate was mounted a plaque; a head carved in bas-relief was visible in the rim. Underneath, an inscription had been chiseled: "In this house was born Dr. Ludwik Zamenhof." The members of the "resettlement" staff were all present. The gentlemen were in a relaxed mood. Without getting out of their cars, they reached for their weapons. Some of them /217/ drew out pistols, others --

submachine-guns. Bogut had in his hand a small-caliber pistol capable of doing little damage -- it could bring down a bird, but inflict only a slight wound on a person. There now began a shooting-match. Orf fired his pistol; the bullet left a nick on the nose of the bas-relief. The others fired in turn. The bas-relief became riddled with pockmarks from the bullets; <glizy ?> clattered to the pavement. The submachine guns neatly demolished the rows of letters: "In this house was born <Dr.> Ludwik Zamenhof, creator of the international language Esperanto." The plaque <affixed> to the facade of the house was destroyed; it no longer caught the eye with its smooth cold gleam of marble or the proud letters inscribed in gold. It resembled the front of the house -- open windows, with the curtains fluttering from them like forgotten flags -- as well as the facades of the shops that had been wrecked, with scraps of iron dangling in tatters where shutters had been. The cars slowly moved off towards the *Umschlag*. The faces of the Germans riding in them turned solemn; their eyes were appraising the crowd that filled the street.

A quarter of a million Jews had been crammed into five small sections of street. On Wołyńska, which counted ten apartment buildings, officers of the SP had taken up residence with their families. On <Lubieckiego?> there were twenty-four apartment buildings for workers employed by German firms on the Aryan side. The thirty-odd buildings on Miła housed the employees of the larger "shops," while

fifteen apartment houses were set aside on Ostrowka and <Lubelska ?> for those working in the other "shops." Five small sections of street, all of them within five hundred meters of the *Umschlag*. A set of streets and buildings inhabited even before the war by the poorest of the poor of Warsaw; a set of buildings where, a few months after the ghetto was established, the highest mortality rates occurred -- the so-called houses of death. The streets had been notorious for the corpses tossed out furtively at night. Back in the days of the disinfection raids, the houses had been known for the fact that their residents could not be escorted to the baths, because most of them were barefoot and naked. The barefoot and naked ones had long since died off. The residents of the dozen or so relief-shelters clustered in these blocks had long ago departed as "workers in the East."

In the apartments, which had been stripped bare of their furniture, feathers were all that remained. Every room contained heaps of feathers, which there had been no opportunity to clear away, and desiccated clumps of dung. They had lain there undisturbed in the deserted interiors until the day of September 7th, when a quarter of a million people began to crowd into the dim and fetid rooms. The feathers swirled up and began to eddy in the air; flying away like dirty gray snowflakes, they cast a veil over the blue sky. They stuck to clothing and hair; they flew up every time anyone stirred in the tightly packed human anthill. Shit stuck to people's feet. In a single hour everything

became mixed together: the people, the feathers and the stench emanating from the soles of those who trampled the heaps of excrement.

The small number of apartment houses could accommodate only a tiny fraction of the populace. The rest were barely able to find room in the streets. The five streets presented a fantastic scene <to the eye>. Within an hour the airborne feathers had rendered the well-dressed and the ragged identical in appearance; the clean and the dirty, the young and the old -- all looked alike. Feathered wraiths, with sunken terrified eyes, they stood, sat or jostled one another heedlessly. Looking down from above on this mass of heads moving in all directions, one would been unable to resist the impression that their owners were standing still -- that they were stamping their feet in place, like savages to the beating of a tom-tom. And so it was: they stood in place even though they were walking; a person would take a few dozen steps, only to find himself back where he /219/ started. With one difference: along the way he would have proven to himself that he was in the "cauldron," guarded and sealed off on all sides by a bristling hedge of heavy machine-gun barrels. Some naïve individuals climbed up onto the rooftops to see for themselves whether there was not someplace the Germans had overlooked, whether there was not -- in this assortment of old buildings and bombed-out ruins -- some gap through they might escape.

As he stood on the roof of a tall apartment building, with a sweeping view of the five streets and the *Umschlag* spread before him, more than one person came to the realization that the Germans had anticipated and forestalled every notion of escape. They had foiled every scheme for fleeing back to the recently abandoned ghetto, from which now reverberated the first grenade blasts and machine-gun reports.

High up on all the rooftops, young men stood individually; although they did not know or communicate with one another, they all reached the same conclusion. From above, the building and grounds of the *Umschlag*, with the railroad tracks nearby, were in plain sight. From the *Umschlag* five little streets radiated; all of them led to the *Umschlag*.

At eleven o'clock the Germans initiated an "action." First to go was Miła Street. They carried out the "action" with the help of the Ukrainians and the *junacy*. The officers of the SP had received no orders to report for duty; the only ones called up were the "loaders," headed by <Brzeziński>, and the *Umschlag* guard-crew under the direction of Szmerling and Lejkin, assisted by a couple of aides who were assigned to keep Brandt company. At eleven o'clock the first boxcars drew up. "One hundred twenty-five persons to a car," said Brzeziński's orders. "I suggest you watch your people closely during the count, because I *just might* pay an inspection visit," Becker cautioned him in confidence. Up

until one o'clock it looked as though /220/ the announced selection was yet another trick. With the help of the Ukrainians and the *junacy*, the Germans herded the Jews from the street right to the boxcars. The desperate crowds who had failed to find room in the apartment buildings strove in vain to squeeze through the jam-packed gates. Every apartment house, every hovel or heap of rubble looked like a safe haven. Reason insisted that their turn would come for the apartment houses, too -- that those who had no roof over their heads would not be the only ones to go; but instinct drove them on, commanding them to fend off the inevitable moment. Inside the apartment houses, there unfolded scenes such as the most criminal minds could not have dreamt up. People dug up cellars; they cleaved the subterranean gloom with knives and spoons, and excavated burrows with their bare hands, like moles. They worked at cross-purposes with one another, scuffling over every underground passageway or vault they came across that seemed to offer a good hiding-place. They flew at one another's throats like men possessed, having no idea what they were fighting over. Twenty or thirty persons would force their way into holes big enough to accommodate only five or six. They camouflaged these living tombs with bricks, scraps of iron and old junk.

At one o'clock, after the first train had been loaded, the Germans began a selection among the employees of Schultz's "shop." A crowd numbering thirty thousand formed on Miła Street. Lejkin and Schultz's commissioners called

the throng to order. The Ukrainians came and pushed the people back a dozen or so meters down the street. Witossek, Brandt and Orf arrived for the selection. They entered the cleared portion of the street; at the sight of them, terror and an expectant hush settled over the crowd.

They walked down the middle of the street talking freely among themselves as if unaware that thousands were gazing at them. Were they human beings, devils or unthinking robots? They came to a halt ten or twenty meters in front of the multitude. Brandt beckoned to one of Schultz's commissioners, while Orf deftly whipped out a machine-gun, took aim at the level of the /221/ people's heads, and fired off a long volley. The crowd fell to the ground like scythed grain. "Stay that way!" he roared with satisfaction.

"Everyone on their knees!" shouted Lejkin, furious with himself for forgetting about the Germans' favorite position. Somewhere within the crowd several Jews twitched in their death throes.

Brandt began the selection. The first rows of kneeling Jews approached in columns five abreast. Brandt and Witossek checked their papers: some to the left, some to the right. Male workers to the left; female workers to the left; children to the right; the young to the left; the old to the right. Families clung together; not every mother would agree to go to the left when her child was directed to the right. No one tried to stop her from going along with her child.

Several dozen Ukrainians began clearing a path for themselves, shoving their way through the throng to the point where the compact mass came to an end. No one made any attempt to prevent a son from accompanying his mother when their family was being split up. The tragic inner struggle of the fathers and mothers was plain for all to see. They had but a split-second to decide whether to give up their beloved tot or go as a group. Some to the left, some to the right. Away with the child! Away with the elderly parents! Away with the older workers, no matter what documents they had! Schultz's commissioners rounded up their people and ranged them in groups of a hundred each. The swelling group on the right-hand side was led away by the Ukrainians in small contingents to the *Umschlag*. After fifteen minutes, the first rows of people in the kneeling crowd had already caught on to the procedure -- that there was no hope of saving a child, that children and any adults who looked older than fifty were condemned. The news filtered back to the last rows. Hemmed in to the front and to the rear, and on both sides by the two rows of huddled tenements, they sought in vain /222/ to think up a way out of the trap. There were a few crazed individuals who <tore up> paving-stones in the street in hopes of digging themselves an unobtrusive grave before their turn came for selection. Desperate mothers wound the heads of their little children in rags to keep them from crying out and packed them, half-suffocating, into suitcases. Those who found themselves near a gateway would

lie down on the pavement and try to muscle their way through to an overfilled dustbin. In a frenzied rage, they bit the legs of those who blocked their path -- the latter, in self-defense, kicked out blindly, mauling the faces of the human dogs with their shoes.

Ten thousand workers were allocated to Schultz's "shop." They were escorted back whence they had set out a few hours earlier.

Next to undergo selection was Többens' "shop." Out of 80,000 workers, only 12,000 made it through safely; the rest went to the *Umschlag*. Their hearts, numb with fear, could have no inkling of the fact that, in this great cauldron of death, they were destiny's chosen ones, for a still worse fate was ordained for those who were left.

Julian was at work at the *Umschlag*. His face was ashen and numb; his blazing eyes searched the terrible crowd constantly for his father's white head. He himself still had to undergo selection -- he still did not know whether he was marked for death, marked to perish. Yet at the moment this was the farthest thing from his mind. Julian was not religious, but at this moment his whole being prayed that he would not catch sight of some cherished face. The crush of people was so tragic in aspect, so horrifying, that it seemed like a film directed by a genius.

News that Schultz had been subjected to selection... Többens is next... The boxcars: 125, 130, 135... Genia... Evening falls -- night falls -- on the *Umschlag*... In the

morning, reunion with his father, news of his mother... /223/
A riot, selection at Pepid... Going out, coming back to the
apartment.

The newspapers published the decrees of the authorities
concerning the resettlement of the Jews to camps specially
set aside for them in scattered locations all around the
globe. In connection with this, the mayor lodged <a
protest>. <? **Burmistrz wyszedł przy ty[m] z założenia.**>

The news that Schultz's "shop" had undergone selection
spread like wildfire. Mothers and fathers intensified their
desperate quest to find cubby-holes and cellars for their
children and their parents who either were, or looked, old.
They begged and threatened, and paid fabulous sums for a
place -- even one that had no chance <of escaping detection>
-- just to salve their consciences with the knowledge that
they had purchased their little darling's hideaway at the
cost of an arduous effort. In any case, though the child was
left to the mercy of fate, it was hidden from the
executioner's sight. Next to undergo selection was Többens'
"shop." Having learned a lesson from what happened at
Schultz's, the employees at Többens' "shop" presented
themselves for selection without their children. A small
number of fathers and mothers with infants showed up carrying
parcels, inside of which their babies were slumbering. Even
though they reported for the selection process without
children or old people (actual or apparent), the party

numbered 50,000 people between the ages of 16 and 45. All of them had papers bearing the requisite stamps; consequently, the selections were made on the basis of looks. Some went to the left, some to the right. The selection was actually carried out under the Germans' supervision by the proprietor's brother, Jakob Többens. Whether it was because he knew that Jewish women bleached their hair in hopes of escaping from the ghetto, or because he had a dislike for blondes, for variety's sake or so as not to work without a plan -- he adopted a method of selection all his own. He did not let a single fair-haired woman go free.

/224/ The firm was allotted 12,000 workers. The firm of Wilhelm Doran <?> was assigned 5,000; Transaria was to get 2,000 people; Brauer -- 6,000; Oschman <?> -- 3,000; the Brushmakers' "shop" -- 8,000; von Schön -- 3,000; Hallmann <?> -- 3,500; <K.S. Schultz ?> -- 1,500. The various firms on the Aryan side got about 6,000 people out of the 40,000 they had employed heretofore. The rest of the "shops," both large and small, and an assortment of private firms on the Aryan side were liquidated. Parties from these firms and "shops" were formed up, supposedly for selection, and led off en masse to the *Umschlag*. The boxcars arrived at short, two-hour intervals. The officer in charge of loading received orders to put 125 -- then 130, then 135 -- persons in each boxcar. Working like pistons, rifle-butts jammed the living flesh inside. The doors were just as hard to close with 120 people in the boxcar, as when there were 135.

A warm September evening descended. The rays of the setting sun blazed over the city, casting the same gleams of light on Aryan Warsaw, on the evacuated ghetto, and on the human misery around the *Umschlag*. The setting sun shone alike on the walls of Aryan apartment buildings and on the *Umschlag* and its tall edifices; all were suffused with the same tinted light. In one of the *Umschlag* buildings lay bed-ridden patients; the nurses were making their rounds of the wards. In an improvised operating theater, surgeons worked non-stop, amputating limbs and suturing mangled faces. Armed with gleaming instruments, their skilled fingers probed in search of bullets lodged deep in bodies.

In the other building, Jews were jammed tightly together. Inside the building and on the plaza there were 15,000 people. They stood cheek by jowl -- young and old, women and children, the unconscious and the dying. /225/ Those who had already died remained on their feet: the crush was such that their liberated bodies had no room to fall down. Fifteen thousand people urinated and defecated standing up, there being no possibility of so much as squatting. Moribund lungs drew in the poisoned air. Clothing stuck to the sweat-drenched, steaming bodies. Fifteen thousand people had merged into a single mass of stinking bodies and damp rags. By the wall separating the *Transferstelle* from the *Umschlag*, *szaulisi* were helping those who desired to escape; on the other side of the wall rose a mound of corpses.

Szmerling's crew was ordered to return to Wołyńska. Szaulisi took over the posts they vacated. Reinforced SS units threw a tight ring around the short streets. Night fell, dark and starless. Two hundred thousand Jews did not sleep; voices were calling out incessantly in the narrow lanes. They had come from all parts of the ghetto. Family members who had been dispersed among different workshops sought one another out under cover of darkness. As they called out, they groped their way forward, step by step, raising their legs high so as not to tread on those lying on the pavement and the sidewalks. The people were utterly exhausted. In the cellars, others were hard at work constructing -- and squabbling over -- their shelters.

Julian slowly trudged up to the fourth floor. Slumbering figures were curled up on the squalid and rickety staircase. The top floor was split up into a labyrinth of narrow hallways. Julian had already opened four doors -- he could not remember which apartment he had left Irena in that same morning. Scarcely a dozen hours had passed since he had escorted her beneath the roof of this building that exhaled an odor of corpses, mildew and human excrement. His feverish brain could not take in the thought that barely a day had elapsed since that time. He had no idea how long he had been walking /226/ up and down the corridors; he wanted to call out, but somehow his voice stuck in his parched throat. He thought he heard someone talking at the end of the hallway. He started in that direction, tripping over the <warwy ?> in

the floor. "The poor must have torn out these missing floorboards and handrails for fuel," he thought to himself. Now he distinctly heard Irena's raised voice. "Who is she shouting at like that?" He paused awhile in front of the door and listened anxiously. Slowly he opened the door and straightened his weary back. Blinking, he tried to make out what was going on in the darkness illuminated by a spluttering candle. Irena, her hair awry, her face pale and her eyes blazing, had a towel in her hand and was using it to pelt some man with blows. The latter defended himself by covering his face with his arms. A hail of epithets rained down in rhythm with the blows; the word repeated most frequently was "idiot." "I won't allow it!" Not knowing what it was all about, Julian found the scene amusing and laughed right out loud.

"Finally, you've come." Irena interrupted the flogging and ran, towel in hand, over to Julian, who involuntarily retreated towards the door. His merriment dissolved when he heard the dismal truth, which she indignantly conveyed to him in a few words.

The little room, which that morning still bore the marks of decades of poverty, had been transformed during the intervening hours into a refuge one might go so far as to call elegant. Gone were the broken pieces of furniture, the piles of excrement and the heaps of dirty feathers. The floor had been swept, and clean beds stood in the four corners of the room. Above one bed, in the corner by the

window, Julian recognized their blanket, which had been fastened onto the splotched wall in imitation of a kilim. He recognized Irena's handiwork -- her ingenuity had worked wonders. This impression, like so many others that had flooded his weary brain in recent days, he took in subconsciously. He walked towards his wife with trepidation: he had been dreading this meeting. /227/ He could not bear the thought of talking to her about the tragedies that had overtaken various individuals -- about the fate that was in store for the two of them. He felt incapable of tearing his thoughts away from the image of the thousands of faces that had filed past his eyes.

"Can you imagine? Your friend Mr. Stoliński has taken it into his head that he has to poison his own parents, and these simpletons are going along with it like a pair of sheep. They're even willing to drink some vile concoction that this poor excuse for a son has whipped up for them. Mrs. Bomblat won't stop crying about her kids, while her husband has been impersonating a lunatic who can't talk. He's been sitting there all hunched up, just the way you see him now, since noontime, and won't lift a finger to stop Stoliński. As for you --"

"What about me?"

"Enough of your jokes. I supposed you think he has a perfect right to do this, don't you? Well, it's not going to happen as long as I'm around."

Julian sat down on the little raised platform created by the bed. He made Irena sit down next to him. Seething, she fidgeted nervously with the towel, winding it around her wrist. Mrs. Bomblat stood in the kitchen mechanically stirring something. On the bed to the left sat her husband, powerfully clasping his hands together in a relentless grip; he kept thrusting them between the thighs of his long outstretched legs, which reached to the middle of the room. Kneeling with their arms around each other and their little cheeks glued together, the children exchanged whispers inaudibly. In the other sat Stoliński's parents. By the light of the flickering candle all one could see was a white veil of glistening hair, the waxen immobility and calm of the faces, and two intertwined hands. Stoliński was pacing about the clear part of the room reeling like a drunk. Through the open rectangle of the window (in which part of the sill was rocking to and fro), came the sounds of gunfire, people calling out to one another, and whispered conversations down in the courtyard. The ear-splitting screams of a woman giving birth came through the wall again and again. This was Lejkin's wife. She had gone into labor prematurely, and had been howling for several hours now. Julian /228/ was barely able to swallow a couple of spoonfuls of soup. His deep calm voice and sedately flowing words had the effect of easing the oppressive nightmarish atmosphere. The faces of the others softened, though their muscles remained taut.

"You're in the wrong. I try to put myself in your shoes, and I know for certain that I wouldn't do this. You're following the herd. A few hours ago, our colleague, the group leader Berenstein, poisoned his own mother. Sztejnkrzyc poisoned his parents -- they writhed in agony for a couple of hours. Someone reported this to Brandt, and do you know what he said? *'Dieser hat begangen eine Heldentat.'* Maybe you want to be praised as a hero by Herr Brandt. If so, be my guest, I won't stop you. Since September 1939, the Germans have been studying the psychology and the various states of mind of the Jews. There was one thing they couldn't figure out: why didn't we Polish Jews commit suicide the way the Austrian and the German Jews did? At long last the moment they've been waiting for has arrived. No doubt there was a bumper crop today. Here we are, sitting like a couple of dopes, and instead of trying to do something we're wracking our brains to figure out the best way to wipe out our own families. Out of love, naturally."

"Empty talk," Stoliński interrupted him. "You yourself know very well that we're beyond help. I have no faith in hideouts. There may be a few good hiding-places, but they're no longer available. Besides, they're just ordinary cellars crammed with people right up to the passageway. They'll have no trouble cleaning them all out. No, Julian, you're the one who's wrong. What I want," -- he spoke in a whisper, as if he wished to keep his parents from overhearing his confession -- "is to spare them from having to go down that terrible

last road. I must save them from the trip in the boxcar and from the torture of suffocating to death in that horrible way that awaits at the end of the line. Don't try to stop me -- I want them to die in my arms, on this clean bed," he begged, with tears in his throat.

"There's always plenty of time for dying. You're right about us all being doomed, but between the present moment and the moment of execution a miracle might happen."

/229/ "You believe in miracles?"

"I don't believe in a thing, but what I do know is that I'm not going to die -- or if I am, then at least not like a sheep. I'm going to keep trying to save my loved ones right up to the last moment."

"You won't get anywhere. You won't save anybody, and you'll die yourself just like everyone else," replied Bomblat. "You were still at the *Umschlag* today. By tomorrow, chances are they won't let the crew go home. You keep expecting your friends and relatives. What are you going to do if they show up? It's unlikely that you'll be able to get them out of there, and even if you do, what then? It'll just start all over again. We're all going to die. The most we can hope for is that they'll take the officers of the SP to some labor-camp. As for our families -- " he broke off in mid-sentence.

The room was silent again, except for the barely audible whispering of the children. Irena clasped Julian's hand tightly in both of hers.

"Tell us what you intend to do. Do you have some plan?" There was a note of faith and trust in her voice. Her eyes glistened feverishly; their focused gaze washed over his brain like a scalding wave.

"For us two there is no plan. The one thing I can promise you is that we will go to the boxcars together. Maybe we'll manage to escape along the way. Your sisters, Renia and Ela, along with Ela's husband, made it through the selection with the Többens workers -- I have absolute confirmation of this. Ela's mother-in-law is at the *Umschlag*, and she told me so."

"Thank God," said Irena joyfully. "But why did they take her mother-in-law away, when she's such a young woman?"

"Well, she does look young, but she has bleached hair, and Jakub Többens didn't let a single blonde go."

"Polcia and Jerzyk are in one of these buildings."

"Jerzyk's got a head on his shoulders. Maybe he'll come up with something. Besides," he said by way of consolation, "she's too far gone to recover. The disease has already progressed to the point where even a sanatorium in Switzerland couldn't help her. My mother is still at <the *Dulag*> with Róža and Karol. There's a good chance that Karol will be named director of some labor-camp and will be able to give them protection. In any case, they haven't been brought to the *Umschlag* so far. The only thing I don't know /230/ is what's become of my father. His work-site wasn't called to

appear for selection. Basia and her husband are in the worst fix, but I still haven't seen them. They may be in hiding."

"I had two visitors today. Grisza was here a couple of hours ago. He claims to have a terrific hiding-place. He proposed that I go with him," she said with a grin. "He left the address and a map."

She unfolded a crumpled little piece of paper with a map sketched out on it.

"They took some cellar in a collapsed building and bricked it up from the inside. He requested that you go there and find the spot, and that you cover up the hole they dug, or something like that, with rubble. Genia was here, too."

At the sound of her name, Julian actually leapt to his feet in consternation.

"What did she come here for? I purposely didn't go to the Garden, figuring that she'd stay put there. She doesn't stand a chance here. Müller's "shop" is slated to be shut down."

"That's what I told her. Don't be angry with her -- she regrets it herself and admits that even Turków and the manager, who had stayed behind in the Garden, wanted to hold her back by force, but that something drove her to this death-sentence. She arrived shortly before ten o'clock with one of the last parties marching to the 'cauldron'. I begged her to spend the night with us. She was supposed to be right back, but she hasn't come. We agreed, just in case, that she

would come again at sunrise, before you went to the *Umschlag*. I'm very worried about her. Every shot coming from the ghetto goes right through me, but she actually rejoiced at the thought of staying on and, if worse came to worst, dying among her friends in the Garden, the ones she has become so fond of."

"Don't you see how wonderful that sounds -- to die among one's own people, and not there in Treblinka?" responded Stoliński. He kissed the hands of his sobbing parents, who stroked the head of their only son.

"He's starting in on that again. Julian, you won't allow him to do it -- you won't let him poison his parents."

<*****>

/231/ "Tomorrow you'll get to sleep in your own bed," said Irena. The flame of the expiring candle flickered a few times and went out. Gray dawn was forcing its way in through the window. In the hallway someone was groping at the door trying to find the handle. In the doorway stood Genia. Her slim figure exuded freshness, in spite of her rumpled skirt. Her luxuriant hair was combed out smooth. She entered the room with an unsteady but graceful gait and sat down next to Irena, who lay on the improvised bed.

"You look as though you'd like to give me a beating," she said, her teeth gleaming in even rows as she turned her smiling face towards Julian. He glowered at her for a moment in mute agonizing reproach. Bravely enduring his glare, Genia never stopped smiling. In Julian's exhausted brain,

the place of her smiling face was taken by a skull. He shuddered, unable to hide the fact that he was trembling with horror. He leaned against the windowsill, avidly gasping for air as he tried to collect his wits. He was recalled from his funk by Genia's voice.

"You're holding your back in such a tragic way that I'd rather look at your gloomy face. Here I am a guest in your house, and you haven't even offered me anything. You have candy and sausage -- how about bread? I feel like having some bread. Just think, yesterday I bought a piece of bread in the street -- I literally bought it. This guy was hawking bread by the slice on the street. Guess how much I paid? You'll never guess 500 zlotys. I would have bought two slices, but I'd already run through my fortune."

She laughed out loud, seemingly annoyed that her good humor was unable to dispel the baleful atmosphere.

"I'll be right back with some bread." Julian fastidiously combed his hair and put on his jacket. They tried to talk him out of it -- they insisted -- but he would not listen to them.

"I'll be back in a second. My baker friend makes bread on this very street. It's two steps from here."

Lejb Hirszhorn baked bread for the SS battalion, the Ukrainians, the *szaulisi* and /232/ the Jewish Council. The week before, he had received a huge quota of flour and the Germans had turned over to him a shop on Wołyńska (at No. 3 there was a vacant shop that had been a bakery back before

the war). Julian had to knock for a long time on the formidable, iron-clad door before a pair of eyes appeared in the peephole. Hirszhorn, drenched in sweat, opened the door for him.

"What a stroke of luck! You've come, my dear Mr. Traube. I've been waiting for you for two days now. I have a big favor to ask of you," he said, highly excited. "Come with me. What a stroke of luck that you've come."

He led Julian into the corner of a large room.

"Mr. Traube, my dear friend, you must do me one last favor. God will reward you for your noblemindedness."

"Tell me what this is all about."

"Listen. You know I don't have anyone left. They took them all away from me: my wife and four children - two grown sons just as handsome as you are. All they left me was my little daughter. You know her, my little angel Etla. I hid her in the cellar," he said, whispering fervently in Julian's ear. "Here in this building, underneath the gate, I found a cellar. There are a lot of people there. My Etla, too. They did a beautiful job of walling the place up. There's no window, so it can't be discovered. In the archway there is an insignificant little hole, through which I pass them bread and various things to eat. It also lets air in. I don't know what's going to become of them. One German -- the same one who gave me the ration-card for the flour and a bunch of instructions -- told me that nothing will happen to me or my ten assistants. So long as we bake a lot of bread -- a

couple thousand loaves a day -- he said that we would stay alive. But can he be trusted? I'm already old and worn out, but I feel sorry for my last remaining child. You know her, she has golden hair. Maybe it's true and they'll let me live, or maybe they'll kill me before I've baked up all the flour for them. Listen: in the corner of this big stove, right next to the floor, there's some money stashed away. It's everything I own -- gold, a couple of diamonds, and some gold dollars. When this" -- he could not think of the Polish expression -- "this Gehenna is over and they've killed me, too, and there aren't any Germans around anymore, /233/ I want you to get my daughter out and take her under your wing. Don't say no -- I've been waiting for you to come, because there is no one else I trust as I do you. Give me your hand, to show me that you agree.

"And what if they kill me, too?"

"Someone'll be left -- some of the police will be left. Surely you know that you'll be alive."

"All right, I'll do it. Now I have a favor to ask of you."

"Anything you want."

"For starters, I need two loaves of bread."

"Help yourself, take ten if you like. Only God forbid someone should see you. Better that I bring the bread to you myself."

"Now for my second request. It's just as serious as yours was. Is there much room in the cellar?"

Hirszhorn went pale. His face was stricken with anguish.

"You need to hide someone -- I guessed it right away. I swear to you that it's very crowded, very crowded down there. They're all standing, packed together like sardines. Mr. Traube, surely you believe me. I wouldn't lie to you. I'm deeply grateful to you, but not one more person could fit into the space, and besides, it's all walled up -- I built the whole wall out of old bricks and covered the mortar with dirt to make it all look old. If only you had come yesterday..."

Julian watched in silence as Hirszhorn squirmed in anguish.

"And who is it you need to hide?"

"My wife and my parents," Julian lied.

"Unfortunately, it's just out of the question. Oh, what's the use -- for you I have to do it. But there's only room enough for one person. Come and see for yourself how terribly, terribly crowded it is down there. We'll open up a little section of wall again. Bring your wife, but be quick about it, do it this minute."

Like an experienced bricklayer, Hirszhorn made an opening in the wall. Genia was the first to climb inside. There followed a long pause filled with loud protestations and coaxing arguments, after which room was made for Stoliński's parents. It was already five o'clock when Julian emerged from the gloomy cellar out onto the street, where

Stoliński stood waiting for him. They flung their arms around each other like brothers.

"You see, you old donkey -- miracles do happen."

Right under the archway <in front of his apartment building>, he heard his father's voice. He did not recognize the man. /234/ Jakub Traube's eyes were all puffy; his face, begrimed and sweaty, was unshaved and had feathers adhering to it. His hair was tousled. The father fell sobbing into the arms of his son. Overwhelmed with emotion, he stammered out, "My son! My son!" Julian, keeping his arms around him, led his father up the stairs like a child.

"Where is mother? What's happened to mother? Tell me, only tell me the truth."

"Mama is still at the *Dulag*. Karol will probably be put in charge of some labor-camp. I was in touch with them by phone all day yesterday. Basia and her husband have stayed behind on the 'other side.'"

"This is where you live. And here I sat all night under the archway. I knew you lived on this street -- I was waiting for you. You have running water; if you can spare one, lend me a clean shirt."

In all the courtyards of the buildings on Wołyńska a messenger announced roll-call for the "loaders" and the *Umschlag* crew at six o'clock.

Julian went out into the hallway with Irena.

"Listen carefully. I have half an hour. I still have to go and see Grisza before heading for the *Umschlag*. Give

father some of my underwear. Let him take a nap if he wants to -- there could be a selection at his work-site any time now. I'm leaving immediately, and I don't know what to tell him -- whether he should show up for the selection or not. If he asks what he should do, don't give him any advice. He should do as his instinct tells him. If worse comes to worst, I have a hiding-place for him at the *Umschlag*, only don't let him know about it. Be well." He kissed her warmly. "I'll send a courier by from time to time, just like yesterday."

At 6:30 the first train arrived. The loaders opened the screeching doors, which parted with a crash. The first wave of humanity began to move. Like a ghastly snake, the line of figures advanced. They tottered, their legs ready to give way under them. The throng kept silent as it moved; the only sound to be heard was the monotonous rustling of feet. Their legs were coated to the knees with mud and excrement.

/No page 235; 236/

<...> moments with Szmerling. Every now and then one could hear "Balbo," as they facetiously called him. The Germans were smiling, while Szmerling was ashen-faced as he summoned the crew together. He issued his orders in terse, professional and authoritative phrases.

"I am ordering all guards to assemble until further notice," he said through clenched teeth. "The entire crew is to await further orders by the wall. You are to choose from among yourselves two men, who will periodically go over to

Wołyńska to find out whether the announced selection of SP officers has begun. Don't expect anything to come of the selection -- the chances of getting through are slim. The Council has been given 3,000 'cards of life.' How many of these are assigned to the SP is still to be determined. I will try to do something on your behalf. I am expecting Michelson" -- his voice dropped to a whisper -- "who has assured me in his half-serious, half-joking way that he will remember me and my company."

The sparse gathering of men went over and stood by the wall. Julian was chain-smoking cigarette after cigarette. For the first time in a couple of weeks his head was clear. He examined his conscience. When was it that he had stood in some room holding a revolver to his temple? How could that have been -- he was so young then, and the world so fine, yet like an idiot he had wanted to kill himself. He saw himself before the wall of a barn in his Polish uniform. They were about to execute him. Then, in a few seconds, his whole life had unreeled before his eyes. He was sorry to die then; everything inside him rebelled at the thought of dying like a nameless dog. Whereas now he was utterly calm. An easy serenity pervaded his mind. "I am not afraid of death. I really have no regrets about dying. Basia is on the Aryan side. Mother has gone with Renia <?> to the camp in Rembertów; father /237/ has survived the selection and Genia is in hiding. Irena..." Yes, Irena was waiting for him

there -- she had faith that she would be saved. Poor thing, how she had dreamed of going through life with him.

He started from his meditation: Stoliński had whispered something in his ear.

"You see that car? You see those machine-guns? <What do you say -- we have a few brave men. They're about to ship us off to die or work in a camp -- we don't know which yet. You said you wouldn't go like a sheep."

Julian's eyes lit up at the sight of the car standing there unoccupied. Inside, the loaded machine-guns, left untended, were taunting them -- the cold gleam of the protruding barrels drew their eyes like magnets.

They divided up their roles. Julian would take command. They did not know what the ultimate aim would be, nor what would come of the affair, but they did know how it would start, and that it had to succeed. Everyone was ready. The car drove away and returned again; once again the weapons were left inside it. They were waiting for the loading to begin, when both of the cars would arrive together. There would be more Germans and more weapons. They slipped out of the *Umschlag* in small groups to say good-bye to their wives. Szmerling observed his men with apprehension. His vigilant eye had already detected the looks directed at the automobile. He called Julian over.

"What are you up to?"

Julian did not reply. He defied the piercing stare of those gray eyes. For a long time they stood measuring each

other with their gazes like two adversaries. The giant man understood.

"I think it would be a good idea if you waited until I gave you the signal."

"Is that a promise?"

"I promise."

Julian rode off to see Irena. In the middle of Wołyńska Street, which was lined on both sides by Ukrainians, stood SP officers with their wives and children. Lejkin, accompanied by a pair of officers, was inspecting the ranks. In a cardboard /238/ briefcase he was carrying a list of names and a few hundred gold, numbered badges. In his right hand he wielded a rubber truncheon, with which he cleared a path for himself by liberally administering blows to those who got in his way. <The men broke formation. ?> Julian had a difficult time forcing his way through the congested street. In front of the apartment building stood Irena. Her pale face was radiant with a happy smile. Her eyes, dry and wide open, were filled with an otherworldly gleam.

"Take good care of this -- put it away."

Into his hand she pressed a yellow sheet of paper with a numeral inscribed by hand.

"I knew you would pass. I was sure they would call out your name."

"What about you?"

"There wasn't one for me. Lejkin has no more than a couple hundred badges. You were number three. It didn't

surprise me in the least when they called out your name.

What's happened to your father?" she asked, trying to change the subject.

"What about you?"

"Don't think about me. I'll hide -- I have a cellar. Julian, darling, I knew they wouldn't hurt you. How is your father?"

"Father passed." Julian turned over the yellow sheet of paper in his hand. What a waste, getting this number. They were erecting a wall of death between him and Irena, his faithful companion, who even in the face of death displayed not a hint of a selfish thought.

"I'm so glad."

Lejkin is shouting in a hoarse voice and flailing at the crowd of policemen surrounding him. *There*, the *Umschlag* is waiting with its machine-guns. Irena has no number. What sort of happiness is that?

"Your father passed. I knew it, I knew he would. You see, you have to going on living. Great fame is in store for you. I see crowds of people carrying you on their shoulders."

A ripple passed through the crowd.

"Sir, your wife has given birth to a son."

Lejkin kept right on reading out the numbers just the same. The pressure of the crowd drove Julian, Irena and the men surrounding Lejkin forward. A rainbow of colors played

over the little commander's face. He was handing out the last few numbers.

"I have a wife. I have a child. I'm out of numbers." He laid into the beseeching faces with his rubber truncheon.

"I'm out of numbers. Dis-missed! Next! <?>"

Off to one side someone was calling out incessantly: "Officers with 'badges of life' /239/ are to report within half an hour to the Council courtyard at No. 19 Zamenhof. Those with 'badges of life' are to report to No. 19 Zamenhof..."

"Let's go and pack."

Someone was tugging at his arm, dragging him bodily out of the incessant tide of humanity.

"Come on, let's go pack."

They went into the apartment. Irena had her arms around Julian's neck and refused to let go.

"Darling, I'm so glad. I have a cellar," she said earnestly. "You'll come to see me in a couple of days. Let's divide up the bedding. You take the blanket, the quilt and the pillows. One suitcase for me. Leave me your coat -- it's warmer." Made uneasy by his silence, she packed and talked continuously.

"Well, everything's ready. Come, darling, I'll go with you part of the way -- only as far as the gate."

"You little fool! Either we go together or not at all."

"No, oh no, Julian! I beg you -- I don't want to. You have to live -- so many people depend on you. You have no

right to throw away your life for my sake. You have no right," she said, her eyes glittering. But when she saw that he was smiling (only with the corners of his mouth), her energy and fortitude slowly dissipated. She burst into tears like a little girl, stamping her feet. She made a last effort to persuade him, alternately slapping him in the face and kissing him. Finally giving up, she fell sobbing against his chest. With their arms around each other, they descended obliviously to the street. The crowd of policemen had moved down to the end of the street. Lejkin was handing out the last numbers. The Council had received 5,000 of these numbered badges. They had to create a Provisions Board and a hospital with six hundred beds. There was the Council's own personnel, the Health Department and the three-hundred-man force of the SP. After protracted negotiations, the New Jewish Council allotted 500 numbers to the SP, inclusive of their families.

Julian and Irena stood beneath the gate staring in front of themselves with unseeing eyes. Lejkin was walking down the middle of the street. Someone's voice was calling out incessantly, "Officers with 'badges of life'..." Policemen were slipping away in the direction of Zamenhof Street. As he walked down the middle of the street, Lejkin was assailed from both sides by officers begging him to give them numbers for their wives and children. Lejkin used his truncheon to keep them at bay like a pack of dogs. The policemen took the blows, but remained undeterred /240/ in their efforts.

Julian left Irena by the gate and in a couple of strides swept past Lejkin. His heart was pounding, and it felt as though a thousand hammers were striking the inside of his brain. "All I can say is, he better not hit me, because I'll give it to him." He wheeled and advanced briskly with regulation strides until he stood, saluting, before Lejkin. The little officer, thinking that Traube had come to make a report, stopped and mechanically returned his salute.

"Sir, I request a badge for my wife."

Lejkin made a despairing gesture with his hand and took a step forward. Julian refused to budge. He sank his powerful gaze into Lejkin's tiny eyes.

"If you can't provide me with a badge for my wife, then I am giving mine back to you."

"How long have you been married?"

"I don't know -- my wife is pregnant."

The very last gold badge found its way from Lejkin's cardboard briefcase into Julian's hands.

"You're a magician! Where on earth did you get the badge?" asked Irena, beside herself, over and over.

The officers who had the badges were gathered in the courtyard. More than a thousand of the remaining policemen had also come, looking for trouble. They blocked the doors leading to the temporary entrance to the Council, as well as the gate through which the officers with badges were to <leave>. In front of the gate stood Brandt and Witossek,

joined by Council President Lichtenbaum and First,¹¹ who enjoyed the special favor of Witossek and the youthful Lichtenbaum.

Lejkin, who had been ordered to clear the courtyard, tried a couple of times, but failed, to bring his subordinates to their senses. No one moved; the crowd responded with a sullen murmur. Witossek's appearance did no good: they disobeyed his order to kneel. A shot fired over the heads of the crowd accomplished nothing. The situation was growing serious. For a moment those who possessed badges were convinced that something was about to happen that would destroy all their hopes. It was only when Becker showed up, grinning boyishly, and starting distributing playful clouts /241/ right and left with his bare hands, that the men with the badges were able to exit to the street.

Brandt checked the badges, counting the men off by fives with the end of his rawhide whip. The procession got underway. Julian rode his bicycle, loaded down with suitcases, quilts and overcoats. Irena followed him bent beneath the weight of a heavy knapsack and two gargantuan suitcases. They trudged their way towards the opening in the line of machine-guns that stretched the width of the street. Their exhausted limbs refused to obey them. Step by step, they left Wołyńska behind them. Their ears were still ringing with the din of thousands of voices carrying from Wołyńska. Making their way to a new life, they had no faith

¹¹ Presumably, Israel First, assassinated by the Jewish underground on November 29, 1942. See Lewin, *A Cup of Tears*, p. 218.

in reality -- they sought each other out with their eyes, out of a desire to convince themselves that this was not a dream. Dream or reality? All of a sudden their ears, by now accustomed to howling, lamentation and cries of agony, caught a wave of sounds coming from overhead. A march was keeping tempo with their weary feet. It was a radio, playing music before the daily news bulletin at 4 o'clock.

Keine Angst, keine Angst, keine Angst...

They walked down the dead streets <back> to their apartment in the police block. Into each building went several -- at most a dozen -- persons. The Traubes entered theirs along with seven policemen and one woman. They went into the courtyard; hundreds of windows rose up before them. On the smooth asphalt, the outline of a man lying with his arms outstretched was traced in congealed black blood. They entered the apartment unable to utter a word. On the wall in the Bomblats' room there hung a calendar showing the date, September 7th: today was the 9th. How long had it been since they were last "home" -- one night, plus a day and a half ago? They had lived through less than two full days, days that would have provided enough experiences to last whole generations for years. They sat silently in the middle of the room, which was strewn with hundreds of things flung from open suitcases by an angry hand. They gave a start when someone knocked /242/ at the door.

Jerzyk Szenberg opened the door. He had a gold numbered badge pinned to his lapel. The narrow streak of his compressed lips stood out against his pale nervous face.

"Are you here?" He stood undecided for a moment, then came in and collapsed in the middle of the room. He was sobbing his heart out like a small child.

"I can't live here. I can't bear to look at her bed."

Irena sat motionless, clasping her hands to her breast. They had to wait a long time in silence before they could get the distraught young man to tell them what had happened. When the order came to march off to Wołyńska, it was out of the question to move her -- she had a high fever, although she was completely conscious. He sat with her until 7 AM, when her fever dropped and she agreed to let Jerzyk go and try to wangle the use of the ambulance from young Suchterbaum. It was no more than an hour later when he returned with the car. Polcia lay on the bed as if asleep, only ... she had these white blotches. She had poisoned herself: she was dead. On the nightstand she had left two letters. One of them was for Irena.

With trembling fingers he handed her a crumpled piece of paper.

"Irena, dear heart: I am going away. I've come to the realization that life is already over for me. I don't want to move again. Give mama a kiss. Tell her that I wasn't afraid of anything <before this>..."

Irena mechanically smoothed out the curling sheet of paper. She glanced around dry-eyed.

"I want to go and see her," she said in a flat voice.

"Don't go -- don't come in here," Julian screamed hysterically, his face contorted in spasms. "Her face is mangled -- they shot her after she was already dead."

The 10th of September was the last day of the selections. Halmann's "shop" received an allotment of 3,500 workers; K.G. Schultz -- 1,500. Various firms located on the Aryan side were assigned approximately 6,000 people out of the 14,000 they had employed. /243/ The rest were consigned to the boxcars.

The ex-policemen who remained on Wołyńska Street, with their wives and children, numbered about six thousand persons. The Germans had promised them that they would be sent together with their families to labor-camps, where they would have tolerable conditions and protection. They were ordered to move into two buildings on Ostrowska Street, once the people who had hidden themselves there had been removed. They were told to designate guards whose task would be to bar entry to all unauthorized persons.

Once again, the Aktion was being carried out with the help of Jewish policemen -- those who possessed the new "badges of life." Each morning, two hundred fifty officers entered the precincts of the so-called "cauldron" on Wołyńska. A hundred policemen stayed behind in the police block to keep watch over the apartments and patrol the

streets, where not a single soul was to be seen. The patrols were just as superfluous as the participation of the two hundred fifty officers in the day's "action." The *Aktion* took place on all the streets simultaneously. Crowds of Jews fled desperately from one street to the next, escaping from one trap only to fall into another one. From morning to evening the trains came. The animal hunger wrenching their guts and the terrible exhaustion of their brains drove them into the waiting arms of the Germans, if only to get it over with -- this torture that had gone on incessantly for weeks -- that much quicker.

They instinctively ran away. The instinct for self-preservation, which had lain dormant deep within them, impelled their exhausted limbs to carry them in the opposite direction at the sight of a uniform.

The streets were continually filled with people. It seemed as though there was no diminution in their numbers. Yet the insatiable maws of the boxcars, which steadily swallowed up thousands of these half-dead beings who could no longer think, did their work. After five days the streets were clear. Up to this point, the residences had remained untouched. They were full of people, as if they were just waiting for /244/ the shout from the SP: "Everyone downstairs!" A single day sufficed for the job of cleaning out the apartment buildings -- but only of those who were found either in plain sight or unskillfully hidden.

The butchers still faced the onerous task of searching the cellars, attics and out-of-the-way corners. Armed with crowbars, axes, poles and picks, the Ukrainians, the *szaulisi* and detachments of the SS began the grueling yet productive work. They went from house to house, giving each one of them a going-over several times a day. Each time it seemed as though no one else was left. Yet all it took, when they returned to the same building for the umpteenth time, was for someone fresh -- and a little cleverer than the fellow before him -- to have a look, and he would find something that his colleagues had overlooked.

As for those two hundred fifty men, they were the ones whose relatives were hidden away in the cellars of the "cauldron." On this occasion, Lejkin -- the stickler for duty -- looked the other way while his subordinates haggled among themselves for two hours over their assignments. He was pale and brimming with emotion; he had kept secret from them the fact that he had appealed to Brandt not to use officers with the "badges of life" to escort the former members of the SP to the *Umschlag*. Putting his own life on the line, he had given Brandt his word that the erstwhile policemen and their families would go to the *Umschlag* on their own.

"By order of the authorities, you are to move to the *Umschlag*, where you will be given separate accommodations until such time as a special train arrives to take you and

your families to a labor-camp. I have been promised that you will have good working and living conditions."

Suitcases and bundles found their way into hands or onto hunched-over backs. They lined up in preparation for departure. No sooner did they go out through the gate in the board-fence and line up in the street, than they were surrounded by *szaulisi* and Ukrainians.

"Traitor! Criminal! Hangman's assistant!" shouted the policemen. Lejkin was not to blame. He had petitioned Brandt; he had agreed to guarantee with his own life that the officers would go to the *Umschlag* on their own, but at the last moment Witossek /245/ had given the order to surround the SP. At the *Umschlag* they were housed in a couple of large rooms on the upper floors of the building. Szmerling set apart 180 policemen -- former officers of Pepid -- and assigned them to separate accommodations. Together with their families they numbered about 500 persons. Just under an hour later Geipel took them all away to Niska Street, where his *Werterfassung* warehouses were located. Szmerling was elated: the officers of "Pepid," along with their wives and children, had been saved. They would be employed to collect and store the belongings of deported Jews.

Although Witossek opposed the idea, and would gladly have thrown a monkey-wrench into Geipel's scheme, he found out about it too late. The attitude of the SP was not to his liking; consequently, he was biding his time until he could afford to dispense with its services. He had not forgotten

how, just a couple of days earlier in the Council courtyard, he had been unable to subdue the hostile mood of the policemen. He remembered all too well how they had refused to obey his order to kneel. At the time he had had neither the inclination nor the authority to risk igniting some kind of revolt, which might have taken a dangerous turn and upset the prearranged program.

He resolved to have his revenge. The former SP patrolmen had barely had time to plunk their things down on the floor when Witossek ordered them to appear for roll-call. He put the officers in charge and directed them to inform the units that they were to march into town. There they would take part in a blockade of the smaller "shops" located in the "cauldron" zone. He led them to Dall's <Diehl's?> "shop," which was to be closed down, and kept them there for several hours. He ordered them to set up sentry-posts in various sectors, then, two hours later, ordered them withdrawn. When the detachment marched back in close order to the *Umschlag*, they discovered that their wives and children had been loaded into boxcars during their absence. Szmerling had succeeded in keeping back only forty young women without their children -- among them, about a dozen who /246/ had renounced their offspring. Mireczko and Bogut, counting on Witossek's indulgent attitude towards "Balbo," agreed to refer the final decision regarding these women to Witossek. Szmerling made his request in person. Witossek gave him no answer of any kind, yet he did not order the women to be shipped off,

either. Szmerling placed them in a separate room. "Sixty to a boxcar!" <Brzeziński> could not believe his ears, and asked to have the order repeated. "Sixty to a boxcar!" he shouted to the loaders.

Julian and Stoliński were on blockade-duty at No. 3 Wołyńska for perhaps the hundredth time. No. 3 Wołyńska was their building. (The policemen once again had their own apartment buildings, which -- while pretending to be on duty -- they kept under surveillance.) It was the sixth day now that they had been keeping vigil. During these several days they had been eye-witnesses as hideaways were uncovered one after the other. With each blockade, search-parties numbering several dozen men in an assortment of uniforms would enter the building armed with flashlights, <siwce ?>, crowbars and pick-axes. They would go over the same attics and cellars for the hundredth time. On each occasion Julian and Stoliński suffered the torments of anxiety. The day's "actions" were winding down. On this particular day, although the searches had begun at 5 AM and lasted until noon, only about a thousand people were seized. The "resettlement" staff-officers turned out in force and conducted a systematic search street by street. As they moved from one street to the next, they took with them the straggling band of Jews they had slowly managed to collect. It seemed as though there could be no more people left. The attics and cellars were apparently picked clean. It was midday when they paid their fifth visit of the day to

Wołyńska. Kneeling in the street was a party numbering approximately a thousand people, mainly children.

Julian and Stoliński were inside a courtyard, standing on the steps in front of Hirszhorn's bakery. Just barely visible, a pair of uneasy eyes flashed in the peephole set into the sheetmetal-clad door. From morning to night Hirszhorn never quit his station by the tiny oblong opening in the door. Each time /247/ there was a blockade, when the Ukrainians and *szaulisi* would go down into the cellar beneath the archway, three hearts stood still in dread. The three men breathed heavily, as if they were on the verge of suffocating. They had gone through this unnerving moment a hundred times already, and a hundred times they had heaved a sigh of relief when the *szaulisi* emerged from the cellar with nobody in tow.

A few Germans entered the courtyard leading a Jew whose dress suggested that he was a rabbi. He wore black satin trousers and white worsted stockings. The hems of his wide satin overcoat hung down below the black and white stripes of his *cyce kaufes* <zizith> with its dangling tassels. His long white beard reached down to his waist. On his head, which was hatless, glistening locks of silver hair fluttered in the breeze. The rabbi walked with an air of indifference, yet with complete dignity. They stood him against the wall. The rabbi's eyes were slightly closed; his aged lips recited the words of a prayer.

The Germans were in a jaunty mood. One might have thought for a moment that they had forgotten all about the old man standing in front of the wall. Bogut was firing shots at window-panes from his <small?>-caliber pistol. It was his inseparable companion; he fired it from dawn to dusk -- the frightened faces of those he left lightly wounded gave him amusement. Resler <Reisler?> loaded a new clip into his magnum revolver. Witossek and Mende were cracking jokes and bursting out, now and then, in lighthearted guffaws. Orf dragged an old woman over to the gate and put a bullet into the back of her head. The bodies of a little girl and an old man already lay beneath the archway.

Bogut called Stoliński over and ordered him to fetch a few bottles. He placed one on the rabbi's head and told him to hold his arms straight out to the sides -- he demonstrated to him exactly how he wanted him to do it. On each outstretched palm he placed a bottle. He stepped back a few paces and stood beneath the opposite /248/ wall. Briefly taking aim, he fired a shot. The bottle on the man's head exploded and fell in tinkling shards at the old man's feet. They took turns shooting. Stoliński brought more bottles. They aimed accurately, except for Witossek, who "missed," so to speak, with two shots. One wounded the rabbi in the left ear, the other in the right one. Stoliński kept supplying bottles. The rabbi, his head slightly elevated and his eyes half-closed, went on repeating the words of a prayer. A dozen Ukrainians emerged from the cellar -- they had not

found anyone. In a corner of the archway Orf was piling up corpses. Stoliński, Traube and Hirszhorn were in a state bordering on insanity. Julian bit his lips to keep himself from crying out. Suddenly there was a scream. From somewhere below ground came a drawn-out, terrifying howl, unlike anything human ears had ever heard. People were howling like wolves and laughing like hyenas.

Orf stopped in the middle of an execution; the other Germans called off their game. Stoliński froze, two bottles in each hand. A wave of hot blood surged to Julian's head. The pair of aged eyes in the peephole were extinguished, shuttered by two benumbed lids.

The howling from beneath the gateway went on and on. Orf sprang down into the cellar followed by about a dozen *szaulisi*. They came back up, and descended again, each of them carrying a flashlight. There was a banging of pickaxes, then a shot rang out, audible in spite of the incessant howling. This was followed by the shuffling of a score of feet, shouts, and Orf's merry laughter. Into the sunlit air from the gloomy interior the Jews began to emerge, dazzled by the glare -- men, women and children. Julian stood next to the door to the cellar. All the blood had drained from his pallid face. On the other side of the door <to the bakery> there was a crash as the baker stepped back from the peephole. Stoliński was still holding the bottles in his hands. To the thousand people kneeling in the street was added another dozen Jews. They returned the rabbi to the

party with blood streaming from his ears. Two hours later, the final party set off in the direction of the *Umschlag*. /249/ There, two thousand people were waiting for the boxcars. The boxcars came. "Everyone downstairs!" yelled Szmerling. They all came down. "One hundred forty to a car," whispered Handtke. "One hundred forty to a car!" roared Brzeziński in a hoarse voice. The column of spectral figures moved forward. The officers of the SP, with their gold "badges of life," escorted the party arrayed in ranks of five abreast. They conducted them across the empty, sunlit plaza of the *Transferstelle*. Only yesterday there had been Jews working here. The loaders were setting up the portable steps. Stoliński walked ahead of Julian. His back was stooped; he kept stroking his mother's arm over and over.

"Julian, forgive me," said Genia in a barely audible voice. "Forgive me for doubting your friendship for a moment. I thought you were going to leave me behind in the Garden, that you had forgotten all about me. Look at what I'm taking with me." She opened a large athletic bag filled with letters from him, fifteen years' worth of correspondence. "I've always loved you. Keep your chin up, my magician," she said, trying to smile. Her heavy-lidded, weary eyes were wide open. "Look at me. Tell me that you forgive me."

"Jump from the train. There are sure to be people who will make a run for it. Remember: I'll be waiting for you."

"I'll remember." Those were her last words.

Rifle-butts stuffed the wagons until they were crammed full. From somewhere a pole was produced and put to use as a barrier to keep the people jammed inside from falling out again. "What are these barriers for -- why don't they just shut the doors?" Astonishment was written all over Lejkin's face, and the loaders were equally perplexed. "Why doesn't the train leave? The *Umschlag* is already empty." After several minutes of agonizing suspense, the mystery was solved. Headed for the boxcars, a column of hospital workers appeared bearing stretchers; on each stretcher lay two or three invalids. Handtke issued an order. In front of each boxcar /250/ they set down between ten and twenty of the invalids. Scores of half-naked figures lay on the ground before <the boxcars>. The stretchers left and returned time after time. The invalids were carried by hospital orderlies, nurses and doctors; they bore them on stretchers or carried them in their arms or on their backs. <Przed każdym wagonem układają starców w drzwi. ?> Handtke was in a rage; his bestial silhouette dashed from boxcar to hospital and back again, with two patients on his back. He instructed the orderlies in the proper way to load the invalids. Grabbing one, who was swathed in bandages, by an arm and a leg, he hurled the man energetically over the heads of those standing in the boxcar. He stationed orderlies and doctors in pairs. They would swing an invalid high in the air for a few moments and then toss him into the black maw of the car. The heaps of invalids melted away. It all happened in silence. Only

Handtke's yells broke the stillness from time to time -- or the occasional crash of a badly-aimed body. There was a rivulet of blood before each wagon. After the invalids, it was the turn of the orderlies and doctors to go. They all squeezed in. The loaders slid the screeching doors shut.

The long serpentine train lurched into motion. The loaders, those who had received "badges of life" from the hands of Michelson, set off in the opposite direction. Lejkin returned at the head of two hundred fifty policemen, each with his gold "badge of life" in his lapel. They trudged along heavily, their feet dragging and their heads bowed; they kept their gaze fixed on the ground. Dry lips kept repeating words of farewell.

The *Aktion* appeared to be over. The Germans in charge of the "resettlement" left Warsaw for other cities -- other ghettos -- in the General-Government. People began to emerge from cellars, collapsed buildings, sewers and cesspools. Small groups of them walked down the middle of the streets. The crazed expression in their eyes, the stench they exuded and the foul rags that dropped from their bodies onto the pavement combined to present an appalling spectacle to the gaze of the few pedestrians who were out and about. /251/ Even at the *Umschlag* building, where one would have thought there was no possibility of concealing oneself, about a dozen people came out. Just when the remaining inhabitants of the ghetto thought they were to have a reprieve, Witossek, Handtke and Orf returned to Warsaw after two days' absence,

and the news struck that the ghetto was to be totally liquidated. With fear and trembling they waited for the order to come down. The SP command was directed to assemble the force at 4:30 AM the following day.

Szmerling received orders to appear at the *Umschlag* with his new guard-unit; Brzeziński got similar orders with regard to his loading-crew. Only the workers in the "shops," after reckoning up the value of the huge quantity of stockpiled materials they still had to turn into finished goods, felt secure to any degree.

Indeed, the "action" that commenced the next day affected only a segment of the population. It was a "voluntary action." The SP received orders to deliver to the *Umschlag* 700 healthy young men who were supposed to be recruited on a volunteer basis. The Council issued an oral appeal, via SP headquarters, for the officers to conduct a canvass among their male acquaintances. The Council offered an ironclad guarantee that these 700 men would be sent to perform manual labor in Smolensk. The campaign was directed even at the rank-and-file of the SP and the Council's own staffers. They were given six hours to appear. When the deadline expired, no one had shown up at the *Umschlag*. Szeryński and Lejkin were sitting in President Lichtenbaum's office when Szmerling came to make his report. They received it with apprehension: "No one showed up at the *Umschlag*. There were no takers." Since the campaign had encompassed the men of the SP and the employees of the Council, they

feared that Witossek would demand 700 men from precisely these two groups. But no: Witossek was not upset about the lack of volunteers. He merely gave them another two hours to bring the /252/ requisite number of people to the *Umschlag*. Before the two hours were up, the police had dragged 700 men against their will to the *Umschlag*. Each one of them received two loaves of bread for the journey. They were loaded thirty to a car. They were given a promise that they would hear from the Council, and that they could send and receive letters. They departed, and nothing was ever heard of them again in the ghetto. On the other hand, news arrived from Treblinka. A few young men who had managed by some miracle to escape, told of their experiences, which made one's hair stand on end. All the local peasants could tell them was that trainloads of Jews from all over Poland had been arriving without let-up for months; that Ukrainian guards herded them into an area fenced off with barbed wire; and that the air was poisoned for kilometers around with the smell of corpses and gas. Also, that the commandant of Treblinka was carrying out vast excavations, building crematoria, and assembling enormous machines and earth movers of strange design, along with mountains of lumber and bricks. Moreover, it was widely known that Treblinka had a labor-camp comprising 30,000 Jews who lived under horrific conditions; they were employed to sort clothing and to knock out the gold teeth of those who had been killed. This was part of the ghoulish processing to which the bodies were subjected before

being buried in the ground. Soap was manufactured from the bones <sic!>. The Jews worked fifteen hours a day. Their only nourishment consisted of soup made from rutabagas, which they got in the morning and in the evening. The population of the camp <remained constant ?> -- the colossal death-rate was offset each day by a quantity of new arrivals, which maintained the work force at 30,000.

When the deportations were over, Brandt ordered Szmerling to assume control of the work at the *Umschlag*. Szmerling split his revamped crew into two groups, which stood duty in alternating, twelve-hour shifts. A few days later a special clean-up crew swept and cleaned the building, the plaza /253/ and the courtyards. No one could explain why the empty building was being tidied up again. This new riddle was unraveled, in part, a few days later when the first group of people arrived at the *Umschlag*. These were people who had been caught in the buildings where the workers of the *Werterfassung* were storing items taken from vacated apartments. They were the so-called "wild men," that is, Jews who, though not employed anywhere, had managed to evade the *Aktion*. With no ties to any "shop" and bereft of ration-cards, the "wild men" had either refused to go to the "cauldron" on Wołyńska and remained undiscovered, or had gone to the "cauldron" and concealed themselves there. They had no choice but to stay in hiding. At the outset, the *Werterfassung* employed a few hundred former "Pepid" officers, who worked in groups supervised by SS men. In the process of

removing furniture, bedding, clothes and other such items, they would come across people hiding in the apartments of nearly every building. An SS man would take them to the *Umschlag*.

Szmerling was officially appointed as commandant of the *Umschlag*. The former bathhouse adjoining the *Umschlag* was turned over to the *Umschlag* guard-unit as an off-duty barracks. The Germans installed a telephone usable only for communicating with the *Befehlstelle* at No. 103 Żelazna. Each day the Council sent over kettles of soup and bread for the slowly rising number of people at the *Umschlag*. Besides those brought in by the SS men from the *Werterfassung*, there were Jews captured on the Aryan side. They would be interrogated at preliminary inquiries for several days; their money and valuables would be taken away at the *Befehlstelle*, and they would go to the *Umschlag*. Every day, the boxcars arrived as expected, but they hauled away nothing but shipments of old bricks, loaded by the men being held at the *Umschlag*. With the /254/ very first trainload of bricks, the commandant of Treblinka took along a hundred men, including those who were qualified bricklayers. Six weeks passed before the fate of the people gathered at the *Umschlag* was decided. When their number had surpassed 3,000, they were sent en masse to work for the *Werterfassung*. The new workers were assigned to special housing on Niska Street, and all of them received green "badges of life."

The work at the *Werterfassung* was of various kinds. The majority of the workers were employed to carry things from the apartments to the wagons. Another group worked in the huge sorting facilities, while still others toiled in the laundries and sewing-rooms, where the clothing and underwear left by deported Jews were washed and mended. The rest of them were brought each morning to work in the warehouses, each of which was reserved for a specific type of article. The apartments were systematically stripped of their contents, house by house, street by street, district by district.

There were different crews for collecting glass and porcelain, chandeliers, clothing and underwear, paintings and light-weight furniture, and heavy furniture. Each warehouse stocked only items of the same kind, and had its own signboard bearing a numeral and specifying what line of goods it handled. Besides the full-time employees, the wives of SP officers, Council officials and officials of the Health, Provisions and Hospital departments were summoned to work two days a week. Some of the warehoused goods wound up in the offices of the authorities, or were converted to the private use of German civilians. Despite the dawn-to-dusk labors of the *Werterfassung*'s 4,000 workers, the vast amount of pilfering by Aryans who scaled the walls during the night, and the huge quantity of goods smuggled out by site-workers on their way to their jobs on the Aryan side (they sold their wares for pennies, since they had cost them nothing), the

apartments of the ghetto were still full of personal belongings and furniture. /255/ It was calculated that, with the *Werterfassung's* labor-force growing steadily and working at full capacity, the job of removing the contents from all the apartments in the ghetto would take more than a year.

Virtually every large structure in the ghetto district was turned into a warehouse, the larger ones for furniture and machinery and the smaller ones for other items. Two churches located within the bounds of the ghetto were converted into furniture warehouses. Likewise, the Nozyk <?> Synagogue and the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie, together with the Judaic Library, became storage depots for furniture. The furniture brought to the synagogue on Tłomackie and to the Judaic Library was put up for sale. Every Pole had the right to purchase this furniture. Items were sold individually and in sets -- even entire buildings crammed with furniture were sold off, the value of the entire lot being estimated by sight. The synagogue and the Jewish Library were designated as "Camp No. 11." For the work of carrying furniture into and out of the buildings, Konrad hired SP officers exclusively. Szeryński made vain appeals to Brandt. He explained, to no avail, that with the SP in such a reduced condition, he could not post sentries at checkpoints, send out patrols and maintain guards on duty at the *Befehlstelle*. He pointed out, futilely, that the men of the SP worked fifteen-hour shifts. After several days of negotiations he managed to obtain permission only to cancel the night patrols

intended to guard apartment buildings from the depredations of Aryans who came over the walls. In exchange for this he was required to supply 150 policemen each day to work as porters at the synagogue. This group was under the command of Lieut. Commander Fürstenberg, the well-known industrialist and former proprietor of a gigantic zinc-works in Upper Silesia -- he was dubbed the Polish Zinc King. The officers worked in shifts, one week at their police duties, the next at the synagogue on Tłomackie.

/256/ On the 24th of October, the Council, acting at the behest of the authorities, issued a decree regulating questions of housing for the populace and laying down the ghetto's new boundaries.

The SP was allocated four buildings on Zamenhof. Officials of the Council and the Provisions Board received four others on Muranowska. The Health and Hospital departments were given four buildings on <-----> Street. The ghetto's boundaries were set. The well-known "Wołyńska Street Cauldron" was cut off from Zamenhof Street by a wall.

There is no one here! And yet there are people all over the place. I came back, I survived, I survived the inferno of the Warsaw ghetto -- I survived the ghetto in flames. I survived the inferno of living on the Aryan side. I survived the Warsaw Uprising. I survived Sachsenhausen and Oranienburg. I survived Himmler. I came back. I came back,

but there was no one to rejoice over this. I walked along, my heart throbbing, throbbing, my blood surging in wave after scalding wave. To the place where, a year ago, they separated us: where a brutal, merciless hand parted me from the rest of my family -- my wife, my mother, my sister and one other who had been rescued from the ghetto. I thought: she will wait for me. There, amid the bestial agonies of the concentration camp, I thought so many times about returning to freedom... I dreamt... about returning to freedom. An absurd dream, foolish and naïve, and yet it came true. I emerged to freedom. I came back to freedom, but you were not there waiting for me in front of the building. You did not pull your hands joyfully away from your face on catching sight of me. Your green eyes did not shine out with happiness. I was greeted by the smell of burning, not yet dispersed by the wind, and the empty eye-sockets of a building in ruins. My heart ceased to pound out its tide of scalding blood. It contracted, contracted painfully, and has remained that way to this day. The beautiful dream of freedom had come to pass, but only a small part of it. It snapped in front of the building where you were supposed to be waiting.

but there was no one to rejoice over that. I walked alone,
my heart throbbing, my blood surging in veins after
some time, to the place where, a year ago, they
separated me. Where a heart, torn from its place
the rest of my family -- my mother, my sister and
one other who had been rescued from the ghetto. I thought
she will wait for me. There, said the best friend of the
concentration camp, I thought so many times about returning
to freedom... I thought... never returning to freedom. In
about three, four, five and yet it came time. I
arrived to freedom. I came back to freedom, but you were not
there waiting for me in front of the building. You did not
call your name joyfully away from your father's watching
eyes or see your green eyes did not shine out with
happiness. I was greeted by the smell of burning, not yet
dispersed by the wind, and the angry eye-sockets of a
building in flames. My heart ceased to pound and the side of
scalding blood. It was not, unbroken painless, and was
remembered that way to this day. The beautiful view of
freedom had come to pass, but only a small part of it. It
erupted in front of the building where you were supposed to
be waiting.